

The Best
Short Stories of 1931
II: American



Edited by
Edward J. O'Brien

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To
WHIT BURNETT

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I shall be grateful to my readers for corrections, and particularly for suggestions leading to the wider usefulness of these annual volumes. In particular, I shall welcome the receipt from authors, editors, and publishers of stories printed during the period between May, 1931, and April, 1932, inclusive, which have qualities of distinction and yet are not printed in periodicals which are brought regularly to my attention.

Communications may be addressed to me *Care of Dodd, Mead and Company*, 443 *Fourth Avenue*, *New York City*.

E. J. O.

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Introduction

I

I HAD occasion last year to point out that the period of literary transition in American writing appeared to be drawing to a close. A new generation of writers had appeared after the war who found the popular magazines closed to them and founded magazines of their own in order that their work might find an audience. It was from these magazines that such significant writers as Ernest Hemingway, Morley Callaghan, Katherine Anne Porter, Caroline Gordon, Kay Boyle, and Erskine Caldwell won such critical esteem as forced the more popular magazines to take account of them. I suggested that the future probably lay with the new magazines, and added by implication that, in so far as these magazines printed experimental work, it would be well to consider how far this experimentation was taking over from the past a substructure of tradition. Finally, I stated that in my opinion the period of ferment was over and that the period of integration had begun.

John Chamberlain, in the course of a stimulating and acute article in *The New Republic* entitled 'The Short Story Muddles On,' was prompted to examine these statements of mine, and particularly to inquire what kind of integration it was to which I referred. He pointed out with considerable justice that many of the writers whose work I printed last year appeared to have evolved a behaviouristic system because they had been influenced not quite logically by Ernest Hemingway. There is substance in the accusation, but some confusion to my mind in Mr. Chamberlain's diagnosis. Behaviourism as a substitute for a philosophy of life is certainly rife in America. It is in the air which every American short-story writer is compelled to breathe. It does not enter, however, into Ernest Hemingway's philosophy of life, and the writers who have been most influenced by him have largely nullified any beneficent influence which Mr.

Hemingway might have had upon their work by imposing behaviourism upon his vision of life.

It is naturally clear to Mr. Chamberlain that behaviourism is a form of disintegration for the simple reason that it is a complete denial of the will. I heartily agree with him in deploring its influence, which is sufficiently obvious among many of the best younger American writers. Despite behaviourism, I am nevertheless compelled to affirm once more that the period of literary integration has begun. This integration is neither specially philosophical nor specially psychological, and it certainly has nothing to do one way or the other with ethics. The integration of which I am speaking is characterized by a general sense of wholeness. A story tends to start clean, to discard irrelevancies, to see lucidly, to allow no falsities, to rub in no morals, to discover and reveal life. The old pretentiousness is gone. The false sentiment is gone. The 'hard-boiled mask' is gone. The reader is now confronted with two or three people and a situation.

The short story is just beginning to justify itself as a separate form. The old conception of an artificial plot imposed too much strain on the form, and turned the short story into something very much like a potted novel. In the new short story, plot is a servant and not a master, as a machine should be. Needless to say, in the transition towards the new short story, we have had to put up with a great deal of sprawling and formlessness. Take away the plot from the old sort of prize story, and nothing was left. The old sort of prize story writer, when he follows the fashion and throws his plot away, is certainly bankrupt, but I do not see why this should concern a serious artist. An artist will always impose adequate form on his material, and as the new forms become more familiar, their significance and scope will become increasingly clear.

The problem still remains as to how the younger artists are to find their public. In magazines such as *Harper's Magazine* and *The American Mercury*, the articles are crowding out the short stories. The article is, in fact, tending to borrow some characteristics of the short story, and a bastard form is growing up

Correspondingly — and this is all to the good — short stories are now shorter than they used to be. The good short story of two thousand or twenty-five hundred words is not welcome in most American magazines. *The Nation* and *The New Republic* seem to me to be neglecting one of their natural and obvious functions by not publishing these shorter stories. In England they appear regularly as a valued feature in such papers as *The New Statesman*, *The Saturday Review*, *Time and Tide* and *The Spectator*.

The experiment made by a group of American writers in publishing quarterly a small mimeographed periodical called *The Gyroscope* has been followed this year by a second group who have just issued a magazine called *Story*. The first number published eight short stories which, I understand, had gone the round of the American magazines unsuccessfully. I am printing three of these stories this year. I think it will be obvious at once that they are the best part of the year's output. The issue of such a periodical is attended with little or no expense. The results are immediate and practical. Half a dozen of these mimeographed periodicals would affect a speedy change in the stereotyped outlook of the American editor. I notice that the work of Caroline Gordon, Janet Lewis, and Katherine Anne Porter became purchasable by American editors immediately after the appearance of *The Gyroscope*. I also notice that Kay Boyle, who is a contributor to *Story*, has stories in the current issues of *Scribner's Magazine* and *Harper's Magazine*. It begins to look as if the editorial dykes were breaking.

II

To repeat what I have said in these pages in previous years, for the benefit of the reader as yet unacquainted with my standards and principles of selection, I shall point out that I have set myself the task of disengaging the essential human qualities in our contemporary fiction, which, when chronicled conscientiously by our literary artists, may fairly be called a criticism of life.

I am not at all interested in formulæ, and organized criticism at its best would be nothing more than dead criticism, as all dogmatic interpretation of life is always dead. What has interested me, to the exclusion of other things, is the fresh, living current which flows through the best American work, and the psychological and imaginative quality which American writers have conferred upon it.

No substance is of importance in fiction, unless it is organic substance; that is to say, substance in which the pulse of life is beating. Inorganic fiction has been our curse in the past, and bids fair to remain so, unless we exercise much greater artistic discrimination than we display at present.

The present record covers the period from May 1, 1930, to April 30, 1931, inclusive. During this period I have sought to select from the magazine stories published by American authors those which have rendered life imaginatively in organic substance and artistic form. Substance is something achieved by the artist in every act of creation, rather than something already present, and accordingly a fact or group of facts in a story only attains substantial embodiment when the artist's power of compelling imaginative persuasion transforms them into a living truth. The first test of a short story, therefore, in any qualitative analysis, is to report upon how vitally compelling the writer makes his selected facts or incidents. This may be conveniently called the test of substance.

But a second test is necessary if the story is to take rank above other stories. The true artist will seek to shape this living substance into the most beautiful and satisfying form by skilful selection and arrangement of his materials, and by the most direct and appealing presentation of it in portrayal and characterization.

EDWARD J. O'BRIEN.

OXFORD,

June 1931.

THE BEST SHORT STORIES OF 1931

II: American

The Enigma

BY LOUIS ADAMIC

(From *The American Mercury*)

YEARS ago I ran a second-hand book-store in Los Angeles. One evening, just before closing time, a taxi drove up and a man came in. There were no other customers in the place; only a few chronic browsers, whose attention, like my assistants' and my own, turned immediately to the newcomer. He stopped in the centre of the shop, looked around a while, then walked to the shelves marked 'Technical' as though he knew exactly what he wanted and where to get it.

He had a striking appearance: he was well over six feet tall, straight as a column, and weighed about a hundred and ninety pounds. He was solidly built, deep-chested and broad-shouldered, with powerful arms and legs. He moved with a springy ease and looked to be in his late thirties, though, as I learned later, he really was on the shady side of forty. Sartorially, he seemed to have just stepped out of a men's fashion advertisement — stick, gloves, spats and all.

In less than half a minute, he picked out two books — one on the manufacture of calico, the other on dentistry in ancient times. Then, stepping to the magazine-stand, he selected an adventure story magazine, gave me a bill and, tapping the floor with his stick, waited till I wrapped up the package and made the change; whereupon he walked out to the cab and drove off.

To my 'Thank you; come again,' he had said, 'Don't mention it; I will,' in a rich, resonant voice that rang in my ears long after he left. It occurred to me that, if he would, he could outshout anyone else I had ever heard.

I had noticed his face, which was anything but handsome, but neither was it ugly — a large, longish face, clean-shaven and very masculine, rather amorphous on first impression, if compared

with a movie sheik's, but on closer scrutiny revealing a definite harmony of its own — a strong character.

He had an emphatic hooked nose, a slightly upturned, broad chin, and a large mouth with firm lips of moderate thickness. His blue-green eyes had a remote, impersonal gaze, enlivened momentarily as he spoke with an awry, unnatural humour. His wide forehead rose high over the slow curve of his dark eyebrows. His big, somewhat misshapen ear-lobes, which stood away from his head under the rim of his hat like two damaged fans, did most to endow his looks with a suggestion of gargoylish grotesqueness, especially if one noticed, as I did later, that when he spoke the left one wiggled up and down at nearly every syllable. His hair was beginning to grey on the sides.

He looked to be a somebody, certainly above pulp-paper literature, and it was hard to imagine why anyone in his apparent circumstances should be interested in the history of dentistry and the manufacture of calico. Perhaps, I thought, he bought the books to present them to someone as a joke.

The next morning, soon after we opened, a taxi stopped in front of the store and out of it came our customer of the previous evening with the books and magazines he had bought under his arm. He asked if I would consider buying them back for, say, one-third of what he had paid for them. I said yes, and handed him the money. 'Thanks!' — and he walked out.

For five months he came in every day twice, morning and evening, except Sundays and holidays, when the shop was closed. He bought only practical manuals, text-books and technical treatises, of which we had over a thousand titles on the shelves and more in the basement: books on dentistry, calico, engines, forestry, refrigeration, marsh reclamation, irrigation, rocks and minerals, pearl-fishing, the flora and fauna of the Sierras, alfalfa-growing, and snakes in Mojave. Once he bought a couple of old correspondence-school courses on — I forget what subjects; and when we ran out of detective story magazines he usually took a cowboy or mystery novel and a travel-book, all of which he kept overnight and returned in the morning.

He had us all guessing. We would stick together the corners of a few pages in the books and magazines that he took out and in the morning he returned them separated, indicating that apparently he read, or at least went through, them. He seemed wealthy; he always had a roll of large bills and wore a complete new get-up every few days.

There was but one clue to the mystery – that he bought and evidently read only trashy magazines and dry technical books – but, while surmising that it was significant, none of us succeeded in building up a reasonable theory upon him. One of my clerks considered him a nut, pure but not so simple; the other referred to him as the Enigma. We dared one another to try to start a conversation with him, but we were all too shy, perhaps I should say awed by him, to venture a remark or question that was not strictly business. Then, too, I felt that, should we try to get personal with him, he might cease to patronize the store. Also, with the taxi waiting for him outside, he seemed always to be in a great hurry. Occasionally, in the evening, there was a woman in the cab, palpably the better type of fancy female – a different one every time.

By and by, our customers began to take part in our speculations about the man. Some of them came in regularly every night just to see him. Often the store would be crowded like an auction-room. In time it became almost embarrassing. They looked at him inquisitively and, though he paid no attention to them, I knew that he was not oblivious of their interest in him. Now and then he lingered a moment or two after making his purchase, gazing about, tapping the floor with his cane as if trying to remember something, grimacing, noticing no one, keeping everybody in a state of expectancy, until, just before stalking out in his elegant way, he suddenly bowed a little to me or whoever happened to be at the counter.

II

One of our customers was a squat little Jew with a funny egg-shaped head, a gravely good-natured face, large soft eyes,

an undulating paunch and large flat feet, which in walking he pitched out sidewise like an aged cow. His name was Mr. Blumberg. He owned a trunk and leather-goods business a few blocks away. Like so many Jews in all walks of life, he had a mind whose avidity for ideas was insatiable, and he came in every few days and bought books we recommended. Sometimes he stopped to talk with me or one of the clerks.

A month after the extraordinary stranger had first appeared, I noticed that Blumberg was dropping in every evening about eight-thirty. Posting himself in a corner where he could not be seen but was able to observe everyone who came in, he would wait until a quarter to nine, when the unique customer usually arrived. Soon his interest in the Enigma was greater than any one's else.

One night he waited till we began to close up and asked me if I had had my dinner yet, and when I said no, invited me to come with him. 'I want to talk with you about that fellow,' he added in a whisper. The Enigma had been in, bought his books and left a few minutes before.

'He's my customer, too,' began Blumberg, as we sat down in a near-by café. 'He came into my store for the first time about a month ago, bought a fine wardrobe trunk and, handing me his card — his name is Chauncey Gordon — told me to deliver it at his rooms in the Marco Polo, that swell new apartment-house on Wilshire they opened last year. Between his coming-in and going-out there elapsed three minutes at the most — the shortest time it ever took me to make a sale.

'The fellow struck me kind o' queer, but Los Angeles is full of funny people. Besides, when a party buys a fine big trunk, the chances are he's going to travel. So in a few days I stopped wondering about him.

'But one morning, about the same time as on the first occasion, he showed up again and said that the trunk he'd bought was just a little too small. Would I mind taking it back for, say, one-third of the retail price? His sudden reappearance and the wiggling of his left ear, which I just noticed, kind o' confused

me and before I thought about it, I agreed to the proposition. He said he would be back to-morrow at quarter past ten and select a larger trunk.

'The trunk which my delivery-man fetched back was as good as new. I would 've been willing to take it back practically at wholesale, and I started to deliberate with myself if I shouldn't offer him more than one-third, but at the end decided to let him have it his own way.

'Sharp at ten-fifteen the next morning he turned up again. In two minutes he picked out another trunk, paid the difference, gave me directions for delivery and left.

'I never had a customer like him before. My wife says there's something wrong with him, and I guess she's right. To make a long story short, so far he's exchanged the trunk six times. The one he's just bought is always either too small or too large, too wide or too narrow, or the locks aren't just right. I take it back for one-third, and next day he buys a new one.

'Don't imagine, though, that he's displeased with my service; no, he's quite matter-of-fact about it, except sometimes he seems amused by his difficulties in finding a suitable trunk. Maybe you noticed that look in his eyes — queer-like, aglow with a twisted kind of humour.

'Lately, he and I have been getting acquainted. Somehow, he interests me more than anyone else. After the third exchange of trunks, I worked up enough nerve to start a conversation with him. We talked about trunks. He knows more about the business than I do. Then I induced him to come into my little den in back of the store, where I keep some books. When business is slow, I sit back there reading, sometimes talking with some friend or salesman if one happens to drop in.

'Anyway, I thought I'd interest Gordon in my books, and maybe find out something about him and his ideas, but — no chance. Never looks at my books. And it's impossible to get him to discuss anything personal, or any abstract or general idea, or anything related to the future of society, or the great moral and economic problems. He's willing, in fact eager, to talk to me,

but avoids everything that is, or may lead to, something that is intimate, intangible, mystical, unusual or controversial. He talks about solid things, indisputable facts.

'Yesterday I mentioned something I read about the social trends in Soviet Russia, and right away, in an off-hand way, he referred to the little model of an old sailing-ship on the top of my bookcase and then talked sailing-ships for three hours steady, while I let my wife wait on the customers in front.

'In the evening, I picked up in your shop a book on sailing-ships and saw that Gordon knew what he was talking about. He knows hulls and sails of boats dating back to the Phœnicians, and uses the right seagoing terms for their various parts. He explained to me how climatic, commercial and other influences caused the Norse shipbuilders to build different ships than the Mediterranean shipbuilders. I guess he goes around picking up such knowledge, reading up on it in books that he buys from you.

'Or last week, when I also asked him something he didn't want to discuss, he suddenly noticed my chow-dog and started a two-hour lecture on dogs. He seems to know the peculiarities of every breed, and how to treat distemper or rid a hound of fleas, lice or ticks.

'The last few days I've been following him around whenever I managed to get away from business, spending a fortune for taxis, but can't find anything that would explain his queer actions. He has a whole string of other stores that he patronizes. There's a tailor's shop in West Seventh, a barber's shop in Hope, a haberdashery in Wilshire near where he lives, several automobile agencies in Figueroa, and others that he visits almost daily, just like your bookshop and my store. He goes from place to place all day long, spending money, killing time.'

III

A few days later, Blumberg came into my shop all excited. 'He's just returned trunk number seven!' he announced, 'and he brought me an elaborate sketch of a wardrobe trunk that he

wants me to have made for him to order. He's got down exact specifications for the minutest detail of construction, including the size of the rivets, the thickness of the asbestos lining, the locks and snaps, the clothes-hangers, the drawers — everything — and how much it must weigh when finished. The cost is no object. I sent the drawing to the factory in Seattle this morning. And then — then he asked me to lunch!

Blumberg told me this last bit of news as if on hearing it my mouth ought to have popped open with surprise.

'He took me to Hubert's,' he went on.

'He ordered an outlandish concoction called mulligatawny, an East Indian curry soup, which neither the waiter nor the chef had ever heard of; but Gordon told them how to make it and where to get the stuff to do it with. Then we had a few ordinary dishes and finally — tea. It was raining outside and Gordon asked the manager to have some rain-water caught in a pan and then boil it for the tea. It seems that tea is best when made in rain-water.

'Throughout the meal he talked of food and cooking as practised in various corners of the world, of everything from gumbo soup to rotten eggs, which are a Chinese delicacy. He must've travelled all over the world or else remembers every word he reads.

'After lunch, he had me walk around till my feet hurt me so I was ready to drop. And he talked and talked. Seeing the pigeons in Pershing Park, he got started on birds and discussed the intimate secrets of a dozen kinds of pigeons, gulls and terns, ducks and geese, owls and cuckoos for two hours, till my head reeled.

'Why should he drag me around like that? Maybe he enjoys the contrast in our appearances. He's tall, vigorous and fine-looking; I'm a knock-kneed, flat-footed, flabby little Yid with a big stomach. Everybody looked at us, which seemed to please Gordon very much. He talked loud enough to attract everybody's attention.'

Thereafter Gordon and Blumberg lunched together once or

twice a week, after which they usually walked around the rest of the afternoon or went to a movie. One day I came up behind them in the street and, watching them, felt sure that Blumberg's idea of Gordon's motive in dragging him about was correct. The contrast excelled Mutt and Jeff. Gordon stalked with great elegance, discussing, perhaps, the silk industry in Korea or the Chinese Wall, his voice vibrating for half a block, occasionally pausing in the middle of the sidewalk to emphasize a point, while his companion, in a shabby, shiny suit, waddled pathetically, self-consciously by his side, listening, perspiring, tossing out his big archless walkers like a long-suffering, patient mother of a herd of calves.

Then one day at lunch-time, about three months after Gordon had first become my customer, during which time we hadn't exchanged, perhaps, two remarks that did not pertain to his purchases, I happened to run into him on a corner in down-town Los Angeles. He saw me first. I suppose he was just coming from his tailor's or his hatter's. I nodded or bowed to him in recognition, whereupon he hailed me with a cheery 'How do you do?' as though he had known me all his life and had missed seeing me for a decade (although scarcely three hours before he had been in the shop, returning the books he had bought the previous night).

'Oh, will you have lunch with me?' he said.

He took me to a sea-food place and said we would have some trepang, which, he proceeded to explain, was a marvellous Chinese chowder if properly done. Some kind of sea cucumber, dried in the sun or smoked, was its basic ingredient. The dish was practically unknown outside of China, but Gordon had found a merchant in Chinatown who carried the cucumbers in stock, had bought some, and then persuaded the chef to prepare it according to the recipe that he gave him.

The trepang was excellent. Gordon told me all about it, and on exhausting this subject received an inspiration from a near-by table, where someone was smacking his lips over a chunk of Limburger, to talk about various cheeses—Neufchatel, Sch-

weitzer, Emmenthaler, Gjedser, Edam, Brie, and others; how, why and where they were made, and their peculiarities of smell and taste. Half the time I was unable to follow him, though no doubt his discourse was coherent and authentic from start to finish.

Walking around after lunch, he told me how a certain tribe of African Negroes disposed of their dead, why Iowa raised such fine corn and Idaho such wonderful potatoes, and how certain ants in the Philippine jungles often attacked human beings and animals and devoured them till there was nothing left of them but their skeletons.

I tried to make him tell me his ideas of Los Angeles, but then he reached into his pocket for a handful of junk—burned matches, bits of paper, peach stones, a pebble and the stub of a pencil—and, fishing out three diamonds as large as grapes, proceeded to discuss precious stones, pointing out the virtues and defects of those in his hand, and incidentally complaining how difficult it was to get really first-water diamonds.

Finally, he stepped into a tobacco store, ordered a box of Havanas, which he then proceeded to light one after the other, throwing them away on taking but one puff of each. Doing this, he smiled, the gleam in his eyes leaping crazily; and when, eventually, he came upon a cigar that he decided pleased him, he smoked it triumphantly, exultantly, congratulating himself on his exquisite fortune, insisting that it was sheer luck if he found one good cigar in a box.

IV

Following Gordon around, Blumberg approached several tradespeople whose stores the man patronized and who were also curious about him. In time, my bookshop became a sort of exchange of opinion about the Enigma; and, indeed, after we all got acquainted with one another, Blumberg called a meeting in his residence one Sunday afternoon, in an attempt to solve it. But the result was just the opposite: the more we learned of

Gordon's eccentricities, the less probable appeared the eventual solution of the puzzle.

Twice a week Blumberg saw him enter the safe-deposit vault of a certain bank. He apparently had no account in the city and made all his purchases for cash, spending, we figured, at least ten thousand dollars a month.

The jeweller whom Gordon patronized said that he bought two or three watches every fortnight; now one for a dollar, then one that cost several hundred. He kept it a few days, showed it to Blumberg, me or one of his other acquaintances, so that he could start talking about watches; then decided, as likely as not, to have a new case put on it or another movement in the case, after which he sold it to one of us or turned it in to the jeweller for one-third of what it had cost him originally. On two occasions he had the jeweller cable for watches to Switzerland.

In five months he bought, so far as Blumberg was able to discover, half a dozen cars, everything from a second-hand Ford to a Hispano-Suiza; kept each machine in a garage for a few weeks, paying rent, while he drove around in cabs, and finally sold it second-hand, usually for one-third. Needless to say, he was a veritable walking encyclopædia of automobile mechanics.

He ordered two suits of clothes a week. He had the tailor cabling for materials to England. He seemed to know every wool, worsted and tweed firm in America and abroad. Once, offering Blumberg one of his suits for one-third, he explained at length why he wished to get rid of it. He pointed out what he called a flaw in the weave, imperceptible to Blumberg, which he explained was due to the fact that the sheep had not been properly fed for two weeks before shearing and to one or two equally obscure reasons, which only one man in a million would be expected to know.

An employee of the Marco Polo apartments told us that on leasing his rooms Gordon had required the management to take out all the furnishings, including the chandeliers, hangings and pictures, and then bought a complete outfit of his own, which, of course, he exchanged time and again, keeping an interior

decorator busy five to ten days every month. The same man confided to me personally that prior to moving in, Gordon, evidently a stranger in town, had interviewed the bootlegger who was supplying most of the occupants with liquor and had been recommended to him by the management, in order to convince himself of his honesty and reliability.

Unfortunately, Blumberg was unable to locate the bootlegger, but we learned that two cases of Bourbon were delivered to Gordon every Saturday.

As to his occasional female companions, Blumberg got in touch with only two of them, and the information that he obtained from them is merely suggestive of the method Gordon employed in getting next to them. One said he had picked her up in front of a movie house as they stood in line at the ticket-office. Standing behind her, he started to talk to her, bought her ticket and after the show took her with him in the cab. The other he had met in a public dance-hall, where, as she half admitted, she had herself gone fishing for a companion.

Most interesting was the two women's description of Gordon's doings in the privacy of his rooms. In the intervals between love-making, he read books and magazines and drank great quantities of whisky, which so far as either of them could see, affected him but little. One woman said that he turned the pages of his books so fast that she did not believe he actually read anything; the other, perhaps the more intelligent one, thought that he actually read every word. Both confessed to having been afraid of him, but on the whole had nothing to complain of. For their poor favours Gordon had rewarded them generously.

He took in two or three cheap movie and burlesque shows a week. The trashier the picture, the sooner he went to see it. On Sundays and holidays he never emerged from his rooms, but, judging by the empty bottles that the servants (furnished by the management of the apartments) had to take out the next morning, he kept himself at least gently pickled all day. Heavy drinking appeared to have no ill effect upon his health.

One day, taking Blumberg to lunch, Gordon suddenly hailed a taxi and they drove to a café near a movie theatre. Ordering the lunch, Gordon gave the waiter an advance tip of several dollars and implored him to make haste. They ate in a hurry, after which they hurried to the ticket-office across the street and, to Gordon's supreme satisfaction, got there at two minutes to one. The price of admission before one was twenty-two cents, after one, forty-four.

Of course, all who came in contact with him wondered who he was and what his game was. Was Chauncey Gordon his right name? Was he an American? Occasionally, he used terms and phrases we did not understand. (I learned later that they were New Zealand colloquialisms.) Where was he getting his money from? He appeared to be no mere nut. Some guessed wildly that he might be the king of an international dope-ring or booze-running outfit; and there were other equally absurd suppositions.

He puzzled us for five months and I suspected, in his way, enjoyed himself playing the Enigma. I believe he was aware of Blumberg's sleuthing.

Then, as suddenly as he had appeared, he vanished. The doorman at the Marco Polo saw him leave one morning with a bag; everything else — furniture, clothes, trunks — he left behind. No one in Los Angeles known to our group ever saw him again.

Discussions about him continued, and within a few weeks we had him well on the way to becoming a legend. People who had never seen him refused to believe a word we told of his strange doings.

A month after he disappeared I received a card —

Greetings!

C. GORDON

— postmarked Miami, Fla. On the reverse side was the picture of a great apartment-house, whose name was printed beneath it. Calling on Blumberg, I found him all excited; he, too, had

a card with the same message and the same picture. Within the next few days we learned that several other people in town had similar cards from Gordon.

I took a chance and sent him a note at the Miami apartment-house. Thanking him for the card, I added: 'It was a pleasure to know you,' or something to that effect. On the envelope I put my return address.

It never came back; nor did any of us receive another word from him.

V

Less than a month had passed when one day a messenger brought me a note on the stationery of a Los Angeles hotel —

I have in my possession a letter you wrote to my friend, the late Mr. Chauncey Gordon, from which I gather that you knew him personally. I should like to see you in connection with him as soon as convenient. Purely a personal matter. If possible, please come to suite 714 this hotel, or give me word where I might see you.

Sincerely,

E. B. R——.

The writer, whom I met an hour later, was a nationally known physician and psychiatrist; a man in his prime, a pleasing personality. We spent an afternoon and evening talking. Dr. R—— showed me clippings of Miami papers reporting Gordon's death a little over a fortnight before; also several letters dated years previously in which Gordon addressed him 'My dear Friend.'

I saw no reason why I should not tell him all I knew about the man. Later the doctor, in his turn, gave me a number of glimpses into Gordon's early life, along with ideas of his own about his recent behaviour, which I think partly explain the character that used to baffle us in Los Angeles.

'Chauncey Gordon and I,' Dr. R—— was saying, 'were born

and raised in the same town, in the Blue Grass country of Kentucky. His people were fine men and women in the conventional Southern sense of the word, prominent in the political, religious and economic life of Kentucky and Tennessee and, to an extent, even in national politics; actually, however, in no way remarkable.

'Chauncey was a wild, fully-grown youth at sixteen. At twenty he was expelled from the Naval Academy at Annapolis. Then his people sent him to Harvard, and two years later I followed him there to study medicine. I was four years his junior, but joined him in many escapades; however, because of his seniority and greater vitality he was always the intenser participator. Reckless, unrestrained. Looking back, I still think that he was rather splendid in his breathless devotion to Bacchus. Wine, women and song! was no mere phrase with him. And nothing seemed to hurt him. He was a popular football star and at the same time showed unusual mental acumen. He was proud, somewhat of an exhibitionist, but seldom violated good taste.

'He had a tremendous appetite, eating like three men, drinking like Gargantua, and loving 'em all, white and black, as long as they were what he called real — had dash and some beauty. His avid mind literally inhaled philosophies and sciences, facts and notions from all sources, and, working them over, he often hit upon conclusions that were as startling — twenty-five years ago — as they were sound.

'Sometimes he appeared to belong to a different species than other men. Weariness, either mental or physical, he never experienced. Marvellous digestion. All his senses extremely acute. He hated sleep, feeling that it was wasting time that could be devoted to living. An hour's sleep after daybreak was frequently all he required.

'Once two professors discussed him. One said that he was a chaotic genius who some day might find himself and accomplish big things; the other, who I think knew him better, replied that, while he unquestionably was a superior individual, that very fact — his over-great natural endowments — probably would prevent him from making anything big of himself. He was too

masculine—violent, scoffing, arrogant. Too intense and impetuous. Life was concentrated in him in too strong a dose. . . .

‘A few years after college, when he was about thirty, his people, eager to tie him down to something, used their influence in Washington to get him into the diplomatic service. He was sent to a secretarial position in London. Soon after that I went to Europe myself, to do post-graduate work. I spent a year in London and saw much of Chauncey.

‘His duties at the Embassy were light; he had just come into a considerable legacy, and he was trying, with partial success, to gratify his various passions, urges, compulsions and appetites. He was interesting himself in all sorts of things. Though in general he disdained poetry, for a time he was doing research on Thomas Chatterton, whom he considered the most wonderful figure in literary history, his only fault having been that he had committed suicide at eighteen. Chauncey believed in life—intense, ecstatic, reckless, and as long-lasting as possible. He meant to write a book about Chatterton. We spent several days in Bristol, digging up material; but when he got to it, he wrote only a few chapters and laid it by.

‘As I see him in retrospect, he had no special talent for any particular art or calling, but a genius, a wild gusto for life. He read a great deal, finishing one or two books a night. Just then Nietzsche was being discovered in England, and Gordon, impatient with the translators, learned German to read him in the original. He was a passionate Yea-sayer.

‘After a while, however, he began having heavy moods and would brood about everything in general and his own place in life in particular. He complained to me that at the Embassy he was hardly more than a clerk. The Ambassador was an old fogey, and so on. An intense egotist, he was perpetually at variance with his superiors and could not keep his ideas to himself.

‘But I think that the important factor in his unhappiness was physiological—sexual. He had a splendid body, but his face was unattractive. A woman once called it animalistic. When in a Dionysian ecstasy, he looked weird, wildly sensual, his thick

hair standing up, almost crackling with electricity, his eyes blazing with an elemental ardour, that was part and parcel of every cell in his body.

'This intensity of his frightened the more refined, perhaps I should say over-civilized, women when he got close to them and, of course, wanted to get still closer immediately: with the result that he was almost shunned by them, and he had to seek his pleasures among the lower orders. This was unsatisfactory; he really was a superior male, a life-crazy sensualist, with definite mental, perhaps I should say, spiritual refinements of his own, and as such required the favours of exceptional women.

'He'd get very bitter at times and curse them all for the lot of half-women that he said they were. He was right about most of them; some of them, however, were real women, too; but, as I said, his intensity and strenuousness alarmed them.

'He raged against civilization — senilization he called it. "Life here is only silly, tame pretending," he burst out. "These so-called civilized people are merely going through a lot of empty motions. Nothing vital! Their intellectuality is dry as dung that's lain on a dusty road for weeks. Bleached out; faded, flat! Afraid to live, afraid to die. They talk — words — words — verbal excrement of intellectual hypochondriacs. Pap! Emotionless, meaningless drawing-room excitements and enthusiasms! Eunuchs! Barren females! Prigs! Musty and unclean — their whole civilization is filthy because indirect and evasive.

' "They can't laugh. Worry about what they should eat and shouldn't eat. If they get children, it's because they want heirs. Half of them haven't any. Caught in their biological insufficiencies. If they came anywhere near achieving a real exquisite moment, they'd pass out. Look at their faces — screwed up into something that's neither a smile nor a grimace. They wriggle in a maze of complexities and long for Utopias. I'm sick of women who whine: 'Oh, I wish I were a man!' It sounds like the noise that issues from worn-out gramophones. Sometimes I think I'm listening to the death-rattle of the white race."

'It's hard to reproduce Gordon's violence of feeling,' remarked

Dr. R—— parenthetically. ‘He was at variance with most things. “And back home,” he would say, “things are no better. Our South, Kentucky included, is not a land of magnolias, fried chicken and honeysuckle. When I left it, grey snow lay on the ground. It’s populated by pompous husks, half-living creatures, pore white trash, practising false refinements, flirting with gossip, but impersonal and superficial in conversation and in relations that might be intimate, stirring and real. Inborn hospitality dictates that they be ‘nice’ to everyone. But there are no special affinities between people. Practising this sickening social graciousness has eaten into their mental and emotional processes and devitalized them. More senilization!”

‘He thought of chucking up the post in the Embassy, but didn’t know what he might do afterward. Besides, I think that he still had a little regard for the wishes of his people. Subsequently, after reading *The Education of Henry Adams*, I often thought of Gordon and Adams together. Adams also served as a diplomatist in London; of course, my friend was intenser, utterly uninhibited, too vital for his own good, whereas Adams was in many respects a typical New England gentleman.

‘Gordon thought of suicide. “After all,” he said to me one day, “Chatterton was wise in swallowing rat poison at eighteen.” But his love of life was too deep in him to follow any such example.’

VI

‘Then,’ Dr. R—— continued, ‘at a house-party in London, he met a very unusual young woman. Her name was Shannon. She was one-fourth Maori, three-fourths white. Her grandfather had been the chief of a Maori tribe, which the English colonists, when they came to New Zealand, were unable to conquer, and so the Queen gave him a Crown grant to his domain—a great piece of country on the North Island. The chief married a German woman, and their eldest son (who fell heir to the grant) took unto himself an Irish wife, who became Shannon’s mother. Shannon, an only child, now twenty-two, educated in Germany

and England, an orphan, was the present owner of the grant, with an income of several thousand pounds a month.

'But for the time being, Chauncey Gordon had no idea of her wealth; she kept him ignorant of it till after they were married. There was a crowd of men in London and another in Auckland who were eager to marry her, but, being Maori, German and Irish, her ideas about Englishmen corresponded to Gordon's about Englishwomen.

'He came to tell me about her the next day. His entire personality blazed once more. "She has a magnificent body," he said. "Her hair flames. It's the colour of a certain dago wine I once drank. She wears it dressed on the back of her head in plaits and divided down the middle on her forehead, which is very smooth and white, with the shining hair coming down in wide curves on the sides — very beautiful and exciting. It's like finding a live coal in an ash-heap. . . . She looks completely white except for a suggestion of the Polynesian in her features, which makes her the more fascinating. She insists she's Maori, not white — proud of it. A nigger, mind you, and me — a son of Old Kentuck — crazy about her! I looked up the Maoris in the encyclopædia this morning and found they were formerly a cannibalistic nation, which I think is great.

' "Her arms are long and firm," he raved, "smooth like marble. She wore a dark dress that clung to her figure. I think she wears such clothes to scandalize society. Tall, well-proportioned body and high breasts. A half an hour after we were introduced I said to her that I knew her legs were like her arms, I mean smooth and firm: and instead of being properly insulted, she laughed with delight. . . . To-night we're going to the theatre."

'They disappeared for a week or ten days. Nobody knew where they were. It was a minor scandal. When they turned up he handed in his resignation. Diplomacy could go hang!

'I met Shannon. There was no doubt that she was his woman. We had a long talk. Chauncey's whole being was keyed up to a tension I never saw in a man before or since. When I accused him of being in love, he objected to the phrase. He was *not*

in love. The very sound of the word gave him a distinct pain in an unmentionable part of his anatomy because of the perverse, silly, romantic meanings, or lack of them, to which poets and neurotics had degraded it. Shannon and he talked things over. Neither of them believed in poetic nonsense, but they were strong for what they chose to call co-operation between the sexes.

'After the simple, matter-of-form ceremony, in which I acted as Gordon's best man, they sailed for New Zealand. The whole affair was characteristic of him, and I think of her. It happened one, two, three! And while it lasted, it unquestionably was the finest match that ever came to my notice.

'It lasted ten years, during which time Gordon and I exchanged letters at intervals of about six months. He broke with his family in Kentucky. He had married a nigger—worse, a cannibal! But that bothered him not at all. He was leading a great life on that Maori grant. They were leasing part of it and using about fifty square miles as grazing ground for several tens of thousands of sheep of their own. Also, they raised prize cattle and other animals. He sent me pictures of his bulls and champion milch cows. They led a free outdoor life. He wrote me of long tours he made into his sheep country every few months, and what a fine people the Maoris were. Having grown bitter about American and European senilization, he naturally fell in love with the great open spaces of New Zealand and the primitive natives.

'As a male, he had nothing to complain of. Once he wrote me (I wish I hadn't lost the letter) that at last he was getting the full value of sexual experience, of which he spoke as a matter of passion rhythmically adjusted between man and woman and flavoured with Rabelaisian humour. Shannon evidently agreed with him. They had three children. "And Shannon says," he wrote me, "that she doesn't care if she gets ten more. We have plenty for a thousand and she's sorry she can't bear a whole nation of Gordons." He would not let her have more than one every three years. Chauncey, I said to myself, had at last found his place in life; after all, he was a typical Kentuckian in that he could be happy only as a family man, true to one woman.

'He declined to volunteer for service during the War. He and Shannon had little use for the English senilization, and she, besides, had an active admiration for the Germans (having lived and studied in Munich) and the Irish. Soon after the British executed Sir Roger Casement, Chauncey told me in a letter that Shannon had subscribed a huge sum of money for the Irish Republican cause.

'He never wrote me without mentioning Shannon and the children, of whom he was very fond. They must have been a great family. From his letters I gathered, among other things, that Shannon was a veritable speed-maniac, full of hell, always doing something, even while carrying a child. They owned a number of powerful cars, which they drove themselves, and two or three motor-boats. Once he enclosed a snap-shot of Shannon and two children — they had only two then — in a speed-boat in Waitemata harbour.'

VII

'A year or so after the Armistice,' Dr. R—— continued, 'it suddenly occurred to me one day that I hadn't heard from Gordon for I didn't know how long. I wrote him, but in a couple of months the letter came back. I wondered what could be the matter. I wrote again; the same result.

'After a while I decided to write to the American consul-general in New Zealand and in two months I learned from him that a terrible thing had happened. The consul enclosed a clipping. It seems that one day about a year before, while Chauncey was attending to the sheep business in another corner of their domain, the irrepressible Shannon, spending the season in the villa near Auckland, gathered up her entire brood, drove to the harbour, and there went speed-boating. A month before she had won a race with the same boat.

'But several miles off-shore something happened, and Shannon and the three children — nine, six and three years of age — were drowned. No details are known. No one saw it happen. The

'theory is that there was an explosion — that the petrol splashed over them and that, blazing, they jumped in the water. The bodies, when recovered, showed signs of having been burned.

'The consul further informed me that after the tragedy Chauncey Gordon disappeared.

'Not a word from him for four years. I thought he had gone off somewhere and finished himself.

'Then, suddenly, this card from Miami —

"Greetings!

Die at the right time!"

(which I think is a quotation from Nietzsche) — signed, C. Gordon. There was no address, except the picture of the apartment-house on the other side. I wired the chief of police in Miami. But before the answer came I took a train to Florida; if he hadn't killed himself yet, I wanted to see him anyway.

'When I got there, he had been dead four days. Poison, *à la* Chatterton.

'There was your note, unopened. On an impulse, I opened it. I guess I was so anxious to know all there was to know. I put it in my pocket, intending to get in touch with you.

'I wired his brother in Kentucky; he came and took care of the rest. Chauncey hadn't sent them any cards. They hadn't even known of the tragedy in Auckland.'

Dr. R—— and I discussed further some of Gordon's eccentricities.

'His behaviour in Los Angeles,' Dr. R—— was thinking aloud, 'perhaps was typical of his existence since the tragedy. As a Kentuckian and family man, I know that the loss of his family at one ghastly swoop was a terrible blow to him. He was a Kentuckian.

'Having known him so well in his youth and young manhood, I think I can imagine — imperfectly, of course — how and what he must have thought, say, the first few days or weeks after the occurrence while alone in the big villa near Auckland, of which he had written me so enthusiastically three or four years before.

He thought of suicide, I'm sure. But then his old love — life — kept him from it.

'What could he do now? He was only forty-two, still a young man, all his powers at their height. Even dead, five years later, he looked magnificent.

'He decided to go on living for a while; but to do that, he realized, lest he go crazy, he must stop thinking about everything that had happened. So he left New Zealand; and I suppose that ever since he'd been going over the globe, avoiding the places where he had lived before, staying a few months here, a few there, spending his money, letting time pass.

'To keep from thinking, he had to keep busy his powerful, active brain; and so, avoiding all intellectual books and contacts, he read volumes about calico and ancient dentistry and all the other impossible subjects you mentioned, and he drank and lectured to you and your Mr. Blumberg, and did all those other seemingly crazy stunts that you described — which were but parts of the system for his madness. You see: paradoxically, to keep from going insane inwardly, he had to act crazy outwardly. A strange case.

'The New Zealand property he left just as it was on the day his family drowned. I don't know who is the present owner of the grant; I think Shannon had some relatives.

'Chauncey had a fortune of his own in bonds and cash; and I suppose that, unable to overcome his love of life, he decided to live till he had squandered it. Perhaps his crazy buying of things and then selling them for one-third or less was an outward manifestation of the struggle that went on inside of him between the will-to-live and the will-to-die. With the dwindling of his funds, the latter was winning steadily and perhaps he made up his mind to die when the last cent was gone.

'Or one might say that all that you observed him do in Los Angeles was an incident in the great sardonic gesture that took him four years to execute.

'When he was found dead in Miami, there was not a cent of cash among his belongings, which were few; nor any record

of a bank account anywhere. Those whom I asked told me that during the six weeks that he lived there he had behaved normally; no one saw anything unusual about him except that, unquestionably, he looked a man of consequence and appeared extremely withdrawn. He walked along the shore a great deal.

'I believe that in Los Angeles he spent all the money he had left after his four years' travelling over the world, except what he needed to get to Florida and live there for a month and a half. Unwilling to finish himself in Los Angeles, where so many of you knew him, he went to Miami to die.'

The Sound that Frost Makes

BY SOLON R. BARBER

(From *Agora*)

I CANNOT say that really they sent her away.
Really, they asked her to stay.

Seppie said: It is your home you were born here and we —

Her mother said: A mother is always a mother to her daughter,
but —

Her father said: Oh, leave her alone —

Her father said that her John was a good man.

And then he went out to throw some hay to the mare.

It was cold all day, and she saw the breath vapour arising from
the old man's mouth as he potted about the barnyard.

Her mother was peeling potatoes for dinner.

Seppie said that she was tired of potatoes—always potatoes.

There was a cold drop on her mother's nose and she kept
trying to wipe it away.

Seppie said that John was a dependable man and honest.

Seppie tried to tell her how he —

Seppie tried to tell them about John.

She tried to tell them that —

She tried to tell them how he —

She told them how once he —

She told them that there were some things a girl could not
love in a man.

Her mother told them about their father.

Thirty years through thick and thin.

There is such a thing as God's Will.

For better or for worse, said her mother, carrying the peeled
potatoes to the sink.

Her father came into the kitchen.

He felt very cold suddenly in the room.

He said that times were hard.

Perhaps it would be best if she went back to Clarendon where John was and perhaps he could —

He was making a good living selling aluminium ware and maybe he would —

I cannot say that really they drove her away.

She heard the mare stomping in the stall.

It was cold all that day and there was an ice-coloured haze over the valley and she could see where the mill was by the fog above the falls. She knew that the water was roaring over the falls there in an iciness that boiled. And strangely she remembered when she went there so long ago to pick the ochre wild columbine that grew in spearpoint clumps over the water, back in the trees. Cold condensed at the mouth, the nostrils, and froze them stiff and blue. When you touched metal your fingers stuck, and sometimes it burned when you tried to pull them away. There was no sound save the sound that frost makes; no dog barked, no cock crowed, they had even muffled the sleigh bells. It was cold in the kitchen; the drop on her mother's nose was cold. Her father sat by the fire and looked straight out the window, over the valley, beyond the mill, and dreamed of summer, I think, and of a wide sweep of wheat rocking goldenly in the wind. It was not summer. It was winter and cold. Her father went out to plug the cracks in the henhouse door and returned with an egg, frozen in the nest. Her mother handled it too long. She felt sorry for them then and remembered that they were not sending her away. It was very quiet and cold and you listened for the roar of the falls through the sluice-gate of the mill. 'All you heard was the sound of frost. . . .

She felt desperately that she needed a friend in this house.

She tried to tell her father this.

He appeared to listen.

Oh, let the child alone, he said.

Her mother said that John was a nice man and reliable.

Seppie said that she would like to live in the city too.

44 THE SOUND THAT FROST MAKES

Her father said that she was always welcome but that one more mouth to feed —

Her mother snuffled and blew her nose.

"Till death do us part —

The walls seemed whispering a hymn.

She heard frost creaking in the beams of the roof.

Seppie went to pump some water.

It is not exactly that they sent her away. I want to tell you that once more. I want to tell you that they did not open the door and drive her away.

It is your home: you were born here.

Oh, let her alone.

Perhaps John would come for her to-morrow.

She wanted to scream that John would not find her any more.

The roads were open.

The girl fingered the plain gold ring.

When darkness came on, she went to a room upstairs where they had told her to leave her bag when she came back home. The room was to be saved for her — always. Seppie's clothes were in the closet. Seppie's shoes were at the foot of the bed. Seppie had placed the picture of John on the dresser. She hid the picture under the mattress. She packed her bag and waited for the house to fall asleep.

When the house was asleep, she opened the door and stepped silently on to the path.

It was not far to the bus line.

She could sell the ring.

She would get a job in an hotel.

They wanted a chambermaid in the Bell House in Southport.

No one would ever know where she had gone.

But they were not sending her away.

The house was very silent as she closed the door.

But she thought she felt eyes at a window as she went down the walk.

She thought she felt a light in the window of the room where Seppie slept.

It was very cold waiting for the bus to Southport.

She stepped, one, two, into the car at the stop.

There must be some way to do it, she thought.

Then she sat down and started the first minute of the long hours of looking out of the bus window, over the snow that was blue in the cold. . . .

Only We Are Barren

ALVAH C. BESSIE

(From *The Hound and Horn*)

Morning:

THE little house stood on a meadow fenced all about with a light growth of trees that marched up the low hills to the higher ones, and out of these woods at dawn came the early bird-song and low social quacking of the crows, till group by small group the birds themselves came out, seeking their food and playing in the air. Swallows shot twittering over the house in the early grey light, and in their separate beds the young man and young woman lay listening with a half-attentive ear to the insistent summons of the oven-bird on the wooded hill behind the house, and the slow cawing of the crows flying over the land, and the twittering of the barn-swallows, swooping after early-rising insects. Out of half-closed eyes, weary with the pleasant morning semi-sleep, they saw the grey light outside the windows, and the bird-song mingled with their receding dreams, to weave a medley that would be forgotten by the time they were fully awake.

She rose always before him, with a mind immediately clear and fresh, and went out into the clean, damp air, doing her morning chores with brisk movements and a light heart. She glanced at the tomato-plants, and plucked off the leaves that had been riddled by the striped tomato-bugs. The dead wood-ash she sprinkled every day had proved ineffectual, and there was always a heavy beetle to squeeze between reluctant fingertips and throw away. The woodchuck sat erect among the boards of the torn-down barn, looking this way and that, and she smiled at him as he finally ambled off into the long wet grass, even though he'd eaten the new leaves of the beans, and chewed the tender spikes of the sunflowers.

But this morning as she bent beside the rows of springing

plants, she thought suddenly of her mother, and she knew that her mother was up too and thinking of her daughter far away: 'a pity she never married again and settled down to a happy married life,' and she smiled at what her mother might have thought if she could only know. She called him for his breakfast, and even as he answered grouchy from the tumbled bed, and rose blinking and groping for his bathrobe and slippers, she shivered from head to foot at the irony of her position — thinking that she could never tell her mother of her happiness, or that she was living the sort of life that she really would desire for her daughter. But the sun spilled in the windows and the cool breeze stirred the curtains, beads of dew sparkled on the spider's web across the window-pane, and across the meadow there were already heavy shadows slanting among the old, abandoned farm buildings, as he shuffled across the dining-room and smiled at her at work over the stove in the kitchen. 'Don't look at me,' he said, and went outdoors. There he frowned at his reddened face in the mirror tacked on the back of the house — at his sleep-lined face framed by the dark foliage on the wooded hill behind the house — and he brushed the hair back on his head and turned to look with moist eyes at the hill as he stood brushing his teeth, his legs apart and the breeze flapping his robe. A flicker chattered close above his head and dipped into the wood, its white rump winking among the trees.

It annoyed him that he could not waken easily, as she, his mind immediately bright and regulated; that for at least an hour after rising his head should be clogged and dull, and everything he looked at ugly and uninteresting. He remembered the time she'd awaken him at night, saying in a voice hushed with excitement and a certain awe, 'Darling, the skunk is out in the yard — I saw his eyes just now!' and he'd refused to sit up in bed and look out of the window. Troubled and restless, she had taken the flashlight out into the dark to see their nightly visitor, while he fell fast asleep immediately. 'I've seen a skunk before,' he'd said, ruffled that she should have wakened him.

Not that he lacked interest in the deathless prodigality of nature, for of the two he was the naturalist, and bored her for hours with minute descriptions of the haunts and habits of the animals — their physical construction and their daily lives. It had come to them both almost at a blow — a dim, as yet uncomprehending glance of the vast design that turned on slow, inexorable wheels about them both. She, led by blind faith in her intuitions, and he by a sceptic curiosity and restless observation, had both arrived at a pathway that they felt might bring them to the field they would explore. For all about them were the surface-symbols of life, the myriad yet quantitatively insignificant facets of a great, immeasurable scheme. Not that they had never looked at them before, but they had seen them solely with the eyes of the mind.

There were the bright eyes of the skunk at night, and the seasonal songs of frogs and toads in the pond just down the road. All night the small stream rushed through the darkness, singing in its variable scale, and the field was full of fireflies and moths. One night on the road they had seen a dull gleam on the earth, and his flashlight showed a dead firefly being devoured by ants, that even in its death gave forth the light that served its apparently meaningless purpose during life. 'All this is going on about us in the dark,' she'd whispered, and had shuddered slightly. All day the crows flew back and forth across the meadow and along the wood, cawing in different keys and registers, or conversing in the trees. You met them seeking grubs in the field, or sitting on a fence-post down the road, whence they arose crying, and flapped heavily away, drawing up their clumsy feet. A dead porcupine was found in the spring one day, and thrown up on the hillside to be forgotten; he pulled a tiny quill out of his finger, with much pain. Two days later a bad smell floated off the hill, and a visit showed the carcass boiling with maggots busily at work, who disappeared again when they had finished their employment.

It was impossible for the young woman and the man not to see these phenomena gathered beneath one universal plan in

constant motion, and though he refused to grant a sentient deity or spirit to the plan, his refusal was but the necessary limitation imposed upon him by the exasperating Why? They talked of that at breakfast. It was good, he felt, to see her long-familiar face across the table, and to watch her large, strong hands serving him with scrambled eggs and coffee, and he wondered at his domesticity. In her presence he felt a powerful yet quiet peace, and though he knew her body intimately and it held no further mystery for his eyes or for his hands, that familiarity itself had built a staple structure that now stood of its own accord and did not totter under contemplation.

It amused her to see him draw a present moral from perfectly fortuitous events; a trace of the pedagogue. Thus, when one of the kittens leaped to his lap, he said, 'Perhaps no clearer understanding of the meaning of life, if it has a meaning, can be reached by one of *my* simple intuition, than can be drawn from the feel of a cat purring like this under my hand,' and he stroked the vibrant little kitten, and smiled at its face rubbing against his fingers, and he wondered as of old at the small and stubborn flame of life animating its body to seek its own pleasure, and looking out of large, inarticulate eyes at the purveyor of that incomprehensible joy.

He dropped the subject, for it maddened him just then. But she was thinking of what he had just said about the cat, and because she felt much the same way in his arms, for no words would come that might have given some tangible meaning to the quiet moment, and though they both would say that their silence was a more speaking conversation than their speech, she knew that that too was a flight from the faceless wall of unavoidable misunderstanding that circled them about. So she pursued the question again: 'If you don't believe in something besides the physical and the material, what makes you afraid of walking in the woods at night?' And because he could not answer her question, even in his mind, he was angry once again and rose from the table glaring at her long-familiar face and wondering what the devil he was doing there, when he should

be a few thousand miles away with new friends and new sights and new people to talk to. So he said, 'Well, at least I don't make a vast mystery of things and invent gods of the dark woods, and heavens and hells and punishment for sins and hobgoblins and devils.' He knew she didn't either, so when she said, 'The only devil that exists is inside your own skin,' he dropped the cat on the floor and slammed the door and went outside.

In the outhouse he sat looking out the door towards the west, at the tall pines on the hill silhouetted against the pink reflection from the sunrise, and the pleasing tall thin birches growing among the darker trees. Insects buzzed and hummed outside the door in the warm morning light, and occasionally ventured in, till he waved his arms and chased them out again. Nothing could horrify his flesh so much as a great whizzing beetle, striking against his skin, and if it occurred at night in the dark, his cold flesh shrank, and with a cry he frantically whirled his arms. But sitting now, he thought of his recent mental cowardice and he deplored it as usual, for a moment, dismissing it from mind with a sense of duty done, and he allowed the passionate physical pleasure he derived from her presence and her love and their long-standing relationship to overwhelm his mind once more and he was pleased to think himself 'in clover,' enjoying the balanced sort of life he'd always sought, his flesh appeased, his mind at work, his body happy and well-kept. Then, when the child came, he would be complete! Thus, when he came out to get the pails to go for water, he actually sang melodies from Strauss's *Heldenleben* and noted that the Devil's Paintbrush had almost covered the meadow with its rich, scarlet wash. There were clouds in the sky, mottling the sides of the mountain with slowly-moving patterns till it almost looked majestic as it raised its meagre height against the light sky, easing the eye with its vari-coloured greens, and capped with gleaming rock.

The spring tumbled down the hillside, slid down its moss-grown slide and cascaded into a little pebbled pool, and he brushed aside the whirling gnats that frequented the pool,

stepping over puddles on the ground. A ruffed grouse was drumming on the hillside, and he thought of the carefully hidden nest the grouse would have, roofed over with dry leaves and wisps of grass, into which the bird might creep and remain concealed while it brooded on its eggs. When he came back she was looking in the tall grass beneath the apple tree, and he knew she was hoping to find the young bluebird that had escaped its nest. A surge of shame swept over him as he went to aid her search, for he knew it really was his fault the bluebird had been lost. The parents were still flitting through the tree over their heads, uttering only occasional sharp cries and listening for reply, for the young bird had been lost almost a day. He had insisted on taking it out of the hole in the apple tree — pointing out the primary and secondary feathers growing in their tracks, and they had laughed together over its appearance. 'Do you call that thing a bird!' he'd laugh, as he held it on his palm; 'the birds, you know, are closely related to the reptile group — it's really more a lizard than a bird.' So day by day they'd inspected the little fledging, while its parents scolded and swooped low over their heads, till yesterday it had leaped from his palm and flown. He put it in the nest, but no sooner were they back in the house than the now flight-thirsty youngster leaped again, and this time disappeared into the grass. It had interested them to watch the parent birds wheeling over the grass, until after fifteen minutes he'd said, 'They can't put it back, I will —' but it was nowhere to be found. Disheartened and contrite they searched all afternoon, till they were completely discouraged and unhappy, then they spent the evening sitting miserably side by side in the window behind the spider's web, watching the wretched female hopping from limb to limb, calling and cocking her head, while the male sat in the tree and looked at her. That night it rained, and as they sat reading by the lamp they could catch faint call-notes regularly uttered, and they looked at one another and smiled faintly or shook their heads and looked away. It was almost as though they'd lost their only child.

Afternoon:

THEY never spoke about it any more, for though they had agreed to have a child, there never had been one. The birds were silent in the heat of the early afternoon, with the exception of the bluebirds, who still gave short, sharp cries and listened for an answer. The sun beat down almost painfully, and they lay side by side on blankets in the yard, naked and sweating in the vibrant heat.

Sometimes it saddened her to contemplate her infertility, when everything around her was so fecund . . . the bluebirds on their nest had absorbed her gaze for hours, as they made innumerable trips for insect-food to stuff the youngster in the hollow tree. It opened its mouth and raised its feeble head when she had thrust her finger in the hole. There were frogs' and toads' eggs in the small pond early in June — the ants hurried frantically to carry off their great larvæ when disturbed, and she herself had planted the lettuce in the kitchen-garden and set the tiny radish seeds to grow, and daily watered them and measured them with a kindly, vigilant eye, rejoiced to see them flourish and lift their leaves into the sun, despite the swarms of predatory insects. She did not feel so sorry for herself, somehow, even though she secretly knew herself to be irrevocably barren — not even during the years of her married life had she missed a period — but she felt sorry for him when she saw him looking at her with that accusing expression she knew so well. She had the conviction that he would never produce a painting that would satisfy either of them, and it was usually after he had sat an afternoon before his canvas and came dejected to her in the evening, that she so wanted to be able to say, 'Darling — I know you'd like to know — I'm pregnant.' Then, though she knew he did not care for children, she knew just as surely that he would not feel so sterile. She looked at his paintings, and something in her breast began to sink — they were clever, they were often brilliant, but something was missing that could, had it been present, have pulled the whole canvas

together and given it authenticity and love. She called it understanding — that was the only word she knew for it: he saw the surfaces of things with an uncannily inclusive eye; he did not miss a thing that could be seen; but the intricate landscapes he painted were cold and had the dead, supine reality of photographs, and the old men's heads, while miracles of line and character and observation, were not instinct with life, or age, or wisdom. So, when she saw him look at her and silently say as loudly as any tongue could speak, 'You're barren — why can't you produce a child?' there was nothing for her to do but go about her housework, and do it as carefully as ever she could, making the house a joy for him to enter, and a shelter for repose. She knew he loved tea in the afternoon, so tea was always ready when he came in from his work — she built a fire in the fireplace, and his tea was served in a glass with the two spoonfuls of sugar ready stirred, so he no longer had to ask, 'Did you put sugar in?' He merely smoked his cigarette until the glass had cooled, then threw it in the fire and picked up the glass and smiled at her and talked.

She turned her head to look at him — he lay upon his back, with his reddened face lifted to the sun; his eyes were closed and sweat streamed off his cheeks and ran down on his neck. His whole body was damp with perspiration and it gleamed, and although she drew particular satisfaction to note how the mountains in their contours seemed to follow the curves of his body, she thought I would not care to have him embrace me like that. The thought startled her for a moment, for she usually was not conscious of his body in its uglier aspects. He was quite self-conscious about his slender arms, but she had not noticed them till he mentioned it — and after all, didn't they both wash each other in their outdoor baths, pouring water over each other from the sprinkling-can, and rubbing down the places that were difficult to reach. It was like him to remark at such a moment, 'God, if anyone can love you now! Greater love hath no man than to survive seeing his girl with her hair screwed up on the back of her head, her face all soapy and

gooseflesh standing out all over her'; but for her part, she never noticed the soapy, matted hair when he was washed, and his squinting, soapy face, and the way his toes turned up because the stone slab underfoot was cold — her retinas registered the sight, but her mind made no satiric comment.

Watching his body lying parallel to the distant sunny hills, his hot red face and his heavy breathing, she remembered the various times he had incited her to make quick sketches of him, determined that he'd teach her how to draw. 'Any fool can draw,' he used to say, so he placed his body in grotesque positions and timed her by his watch until she gained considerable proficiency at catching lines and postures, and then he became jealous of her success and stopped his sittings. She remembered the other afternoon at the spring, when she had given him a cold shower, at his request, laughing as she held the sprinkler over him and he howled and wriggled and rubbed his body down. Suddenly it had struck her a terrific, almost physical blow — just as he thrust out his chest against the spray and she saw the great muscles bulge with the cold, and the brown skin tighten across them, and the flush of red blood rise to the surface of his body — just as he held his head under the cascade and the water tumbled over his shoulders and down his back to flow between his legs, and he rose with a shout of pleasurable discomfort and grasped the glass and drank a great gulp of the ice-cold water — 'inside and out,' he'd said, 'inside and out'; then it struck her that this fine, sentient body with its gleaming brown skin and hot red blood and firm muscles — that this man standing there erect on his strong legs, gulping down ice-water and rubbing his stomach with a large, strong hand, was oh so surely going to die and turn back into the earth he stood upon, and rot away into a dry and powdery dust — and she was glad of it! It seemed right to her, and just and beautiful, and she was thrilled with the beauty of the destiny that nature held out to all living, with smiling eyes and firm, implacable lips, as though it were a much-desired gift.

He wiped the sweat from his face with a blue bandana lying

by his side and said, 'Time's up,' and turned to look at her. She sat up and smiled and he saw her head and shoulders against the sky and distant hills; and with that relationship he became aware of the heart of his problem — and it struck him that a painting of her head against the sky and the green hills, with those heavy, moving cloud-banks in the north, her face, smiling down out of the canvas with large, pale eyes, would just about express all he could ever feel or think or know.

'I'm going in now, darling,' she said and rose, and folding up her blanket, 'I'll have tea for you after work —'

'It's much too hot,' he said, 'I'll try to work and then go chop some wood.'

'Well, then I'll weed the garden; I've left it now a week — so I won't have to wash the dishes till to-night. I think there'll be enough clean ones for supper.' She went in, and he watched her naked body walking across the little lawn, swaying slightly at the hips.

'How I have wasted my life!' he said aloud, and lay back again for a moment, clasping his hands behind his head and staring at the sun with eyelids firmly closed. . . . All during the sunbath he had been looking at the sun, and his eyes had noted the spectra that his eyelids could induce, depending on how tightly they were closed, and he'd been enjoying the flowing of the heavy heat into his flesh. But with the vision of her head against the sky, it was as though all the problems he had ever pondered rose up at last and assumed material form to vex him. He knew he could never get that down on canvas, and he knew deep in his heart that he could never get anything as completely 'down on canvas' as he so hotly desired. All the great pattern that seemed to turn about them both — it was too vast a scheme for him to compass. Look at how the morning had been wasted! it was the same thing every single day. He envisaged himself so busily at work, if the ideal could only be attained, that he'd have no time for anything but work. He saw great glowing canvases rise before his eyes — the progress of the seasons, the programme of the day, the weather,

faces of men and women from birth to death in beautiful schemata — he would achieve them all! But what could he do about it? All he did was to copy mountains down on prepared cloth, — he painted the gnarled and weathered cedar on the hill, in sunlight and in rain and in the moon; thinking thereby to have said at least one thing completely, and put it aside for ever. But when that had been done, there was still the not-to-be-considered task of painting the naked body in all its possible aspects; or even choosing an aspect which would imply all others from birth to death, and thus truly express his intuition of it.

A child would somehow explain and sanction their socially unrecognized relationship, he knew. Instead of making it a worse offence in nature, they both felt that it would be a final proof of the validity of their love, and yet it never came; and because it never came he felt himself trapped and snared into compliance with her will. The words, 'Well, here I am,' were ever present in his mind, and he laughed at the irony of his position — had he been married he would have really felt himself enslaved — but still unmarried he was twice as fettered as before, so he resented the demands of his own flesh as well as hers, and saw in them a symbol of the senseless repetition of all natural phenomena — dawn and noon and night and dawn again; birth and life and death and birth again; spring and summer, autumn, winter and then spring again, and to what end?

Life has meaning, he thought, as he sat before his canvas with the running brook and the hills sketched in, only in so far as we draw our trite conclusions from it for our own guidance and contentment. No child! he thought — no work to survive me; the fruit of love is stifled in the womb and never comes to light. The intuition is smothered in the mind and never can be uttered in its total beauty in completion, no matter how we strive. . . .

Such thoughts as these, which he knew to be invalid to anyone else and he dared not convey for fear they would be scorned for puerility — and therein lay his great exasperation, for they were the best that he could do — inevitably brought

him to the only bearable conclusion: life had meaning to him only in the living — so he scraped his dirty palette and he folded up his dirty paint-box, and took his empty canvas, that was to have a mountain and a stream displayed in colours real as life upon its face, and he went back to the house and got his axe.

He looked at the spider's web stretched on the window-pane; it had been repaired since last night's rain — and he wondered again if there were not some geometric plan at the basis of all natural processes, until he remembered that, at least as far as the spider's web was concerned, and the hexagonal cells constructed by the bees, the line of least resistance was always the easiest to take — and therefore a certain mathematical precision was always to be expected of living tissue at work.

He viewed his woodpile with pride — day by day it grew, as he gradually split up the half-rotten boards and beams of the old barn, and he had even established a routine in his chopping, selecting the lighter boards to break up first, and then the heavier, and then the beams; though he often thought it would have been easier to reverse the process, and take the harder work when he was fresher. But it didn't matter so long as he achieved the ultimate sweet agony of fatigue, followed by a cold shower and its miraculous muscular freshening; and the subconscious knowledge that he was building up his body as he worked was a precious secret that he spent many minutes daily contemplating, usually when the fatigue had begun to pile up to its tetanus, and his arms and back ached cruelly. Then he said to himself, 'Just one more beam,' and dragged it out of the heap of broken boards and scattered shingles and debris; and he rejoiced in the will-power he displayed.

The sun was declining in the west, thrusting its fingers through the brisk comb of the pines on the western hill. He looked over to where the kittens were playing among the tall weeds around the hotbed, lying in wait for each other, and then with prodigious leaps and bounds almost vertically in the air, pouncing on each other's backs. Their complete relaxation permits them their apparently unbounded energy, he thought,

then bit his lips and fell to his chopping, for the kittens were a sore spot in his heart — try as he would, he could not get a sketch of them at rest or sleep or play that caught their gracile forms and nimble spirits. They were constantly eluding him with hitherto unbeheld attitudes, uncatlike in the extreme, and careful study seemed to no avail. Their movements seemed untimed and unrelated — they might spring out of a completely relaxed pose into a grotesque attitude of gymnastic abandon; and yet it was the perfect timing of their actions and the artless articulation of their bodies that baffled his really careful research.

Bending over his woodchopping in the pleasant heat of the setting sun, he glanced over to where she was transplanting from the hotbed to the little ploughed area that was her garden. It pleased him to reflect that the garden was entirely her own creation: she constructed the hotbed herself, and covered it with some old windows from the torn-down barn—she had planted the seeds herself and nursed them carefully during the long hot June days. 'I like things that grow in the earth better than those that hop on it, I guess,' she had said, and he smiled remembering that night they had investigated the great, fat toad, with his flashlight. 'How perfectly he's constructed,' she had said, and he'd said, '*She* — it's a she — the males of this species have black throats. Too bad she's not a male,' he'd added, 'for if she were, we could make him sing by picking him up by his two forelegs. They always do, somehow.' Now he enjoyed watching the strong curve of her loins as she crouched at her work, digging the warm earth out with her fingers and placing the tender little plant in the hole, and tucking it in firmly.

She fitted perfectly into the landscape, and the curve of her haunches was paralleled from his angle by the greater curve of the quiet hill — and he enjoyed thinking of her pregnant, and if she were, he felt the hill would suffer by the comparison, for she was quick with life and the hill stood lonely and silent for ever and would never bring forth so much as a mouse. He waved his hand before his face — the gnats were torturesome these afternoons — and he bent again to his work, swinging the

long axe as powerfully as he could and grunting as it bit into the hard, weathered wood. He enjoyed beyond measure the deep, sharp bite of the blade, and the heavy thud, and the echo of the blow off the wooded hill, and he formulated the words, This is right — this is as it should be; but he could not speak them for the sudden sheer joy that flooded him, and he harboured them in his breast and swung the axe harder and harder, grunting rhythmically and feeling his muscles tire, and shaking the little drops of salty sweat off the end of his nose. The pain of fatigue gradually crept up his arms and stiffened the muscles, so that though he stubbornly swung harder and harder in defiance, he finally had to stop and stand erect, his muscles soft as water, and the ache leaping in his arms and sides and back.

The sound of the stream was in his ears from the south, and from the north he heard the sound of the evening wind in the trees, like the roar and insensate rush of a great overhead fire, and as he stood, axe in hand and watched, there drifted out of the west great banks of lead-coloured clouds tinged beneath with salmon, as though the sun in setting had touched the earth to fire and this was the flame-lit, belching smoke of its monstrous conflagration. Slowly and steadily it drifted over the land, casting its shadow upon field and wooded hill, and the swifts wheeled nervously beneath it on crescentic wings, restless from the long day's insect-hunt and anxious for their nests.

He carried his axe in his hand over to where she knelt beside her plants. She said, 'Hello,' but kept to her work and did not look up at him. 'Which are the peas?' he said, and she pointed to the geometrically folded leaves and the intricate curling tendrils, ready now for their supporting sticks, and spared by some miracle from the marauding 'chuck. 'Christ!' he suddenly said, pointing to the meadow, 'look at it all, life all around us!' and he grinned idiotically and slapped her on the back; 'millions of blades of grass growing, each one a little life, each one coming out of a little tiny seed, flourishing and growing —' 'Yes,' she said, and turned her face up to him, and he

stopped dead in the middle of his fervid speech, for he saw there were tears in her eyes, ready to spill out. Her hands were black with the rich soil she had been handling; 'Yes,' she said again, 'only *we* — oh, forgive me!'

Night:

DURING the day the little river could be heard if you cared to listen for it, but at night it was the night's own sound, superseding all others, and with the cessation of the frog- and toad-song at the end of June, it assumed undisputed sway and rushed over its smooth round stones all night, imperious and yet ghostly in its insistence. So it became their habit, when they paused in their evening conversation before the fire, to sit and listen to the river, and allow its restful sibilance to smooth away the slightest remembrance of what they had been talking about. He engaged in this escape more frequently than she, and more completely, for he added the further hypnotic of staring at the fire, until he was so far from her and the little house and their main problem, and himself, that he could not recall their recently interrupted talk when she suddenly spoke to him, and he was for the moment a complete idiot.

She drew a quiet, contemplative sort of peace from watching his face as he sat sucking at his pipe, and trying to read his thoughts — she never could. He was still young enough unconsciously to mirror his slightest feelings and ideas upon his face, in conversation, but with the coming of the night and the rush of the river in his ears and the sight of the aspiring flames before his eyes, it was as though his old age came upon him with a rush and a pounce — a mask of age-old weariness fell before his face, and it was impenetrable to her gaze and to her mind. What a fine face he has, she thought, and she was glad she had sufficient self-restraint to still her tongue and not talk to him when he sat drowned in his mood. She constructed whole realms of ideas for him to wander in, and when by accident his face assumed a momentary expression that tallied with her

thought, she felt a slight triumphant thrill within her, as though she had compelled him, by the power of her mind, to think of what she thought he ought to think. The fire-light cut a slender line on his face silhouetted against the dark wall behind him, and she thought what a pity it was that people's externals were such inadequate symbols of their minds and their hearts — surely the high white forehead and the long straight nose, the sensitive lips and chin in their sure and steady contour should somehow spell a finer artist than she knew him to be, and she suddenly knew that despite his endless protestations of insignificance in the face of space and eternity and the very earth itself, such an idea in its full implication was as far from his consciousness as he said the nearest star was from the earth. You had only to look at the way he held his pipe, and the unconsciously studied seriousness of his posture and expression and his movements when he thought himself 'deep in thought' to observe how much he really thought of himself. So she was overwhelmed with a great contempt for him, and she hated the way he held his pipe and the way he crossed his legs and the way he sat with head inclined to the side, looking at the crackling fire and so concerned with thoughts he obviously considered deep and pregnant; but she was immediately flooded with immense maternal pity — he grew young in his chair, and was a tired and scared little boy, petulantly sucking at his thumb and pouting at the fire, and she wanted to gather him in her arms and * * * rock his body back and forth until he fell asleep.

The moon mingled its unearthly light with the healthy flame-light, slanting in the windows and cutting pale squares and oblongs on the floor. Once more, as she sat by the table looking at the pages of her book in the steady glow of the oil-lamp, she was amazed at the numberless infinitesimal bugs and winged insects that collected round the lamp. If she touched them, they were spots. They hopped, or they fluttered back and forth about the shade, or they flew in idiotic circles round and round until exhausted and then dropped into the chimney and were scorched.

'Say!' he suddenly cried, and grasped her hand just as she was about to drop a fair-sized miller in the chimney, 'What's the idea? Why, I'm surprised at you!'

She let the miller go and looked abashed; 'I am myself,' she said, 'I can't imagine what made me want to do it.' They let the subject drop, and sat quietly awhile listening to the kittens scampering back and forth across the floor of the little house, chasing one another in the dark. Then he got up and went out of the door. The field outside was sparkling with so many thousand fireflies, which winked so brilliantly and incessantly that for a moment after stepping out he had the impression that he had been dealt a sharp blow across the eyes. The night was cool and full of the rush of the rocky river, and the stars were far off and very cold, and mist was creeping toward the house from the fields about. Then he knew that it would be just as impossible for a musician to 'get' the sound of the stream flowing at night, as it would be for him, the painter, to get the fire he'd been watching down on canvas; and he decided that painting fire and light and water was just as much a bastardized 'programme' work as translating into music a rooster crowing, or a brook rattling over its pebbles, or a kitten mewing, or the roaring of a tempest in the trees; then he knew that his whole approach to his art had been wrong — for why should he want to paint the gnarled mountain cedar in all weathers and all lights, and think thereby he had caught its magic with his brush? And why should he want to catch all the wrinkles in an old man's stupid face, or the minute details of an autumn landscape, or his lady's face against the sky — ridiculous conception!

Empty of feeling and chilled by the night air, he returned to the house. One toad was still singing, out of season, in the pond just down the road, and he had a sudden desire to escape life in all its manifestations, and not have to look at the hard and distant stars, or the blinking fireflies, or stand in the weird mingled moon- and star-light; and particularly he wanted to get in bed and put his head under a pillow, so that he might not hear the inevitable droning of the river.

The one thing he felt constantly glad of, was their constant isolation. There in the mountains they did not see or speak to more than two or three people a week, and he rejoiced because they were such simple people, and envied them their true simplicity. At Farmer Brown's, where they went to get their milk, he invariably discussed cows and milking with the dry old man, and felt a desperate delight in learning of the effect that various grasses had upon their daily yield; while she went to the barn and bent down to the partly Persian cat and stroked her pregnant belly. 'She liked to have her kittens stroked,' she said and smiled up at him when he came to her.

He took his pipe out of his pocket and knocked its ashes out upon the floor, filled it again, then groped for the box of matches that he knew was on the window-sill. She came out of the sitting-room, the lamp, now out, in hand. 'I'm going to fill the lamp again,' she said, 'it looked as though it wanted to go out.' Lighting his pipe, he saw a movement in the spider's web, and held the match against the window-pane. 'Look!' he cried, 'the spider's in its web,' and she came to him from the little kitchen, after she had filled the reservoir. They sat down on a bench and watched the spider as it adjusted itself to wait for chance prey — it climbed up to the centre of its web, walking delicately like a dancing-master, and reaching the centre, turned upside down and hung there, pulling in its jointed legs. She went to get the flashlight, but in the meanwhile a small ichneumon fly had flown against the web, and he alone saw the spider's lightning slide down to the bottom of the web, and its quick, skilled movements as it killed its prey. When she came back with the light it caught up the now dry body of the fly, dropped it to the ground, climbed aloft again and settled down to wait. 'You should have *seen* it!' he exclaimed; 'we'll sit here and just watch till another comes along . . . the light'll drum up trade for the spider.' But nothing answered to the lure of the light in the window of the little house, and they became impatient with delay. 'You're good at catching millers,' he said, 'why don't you go out and get one, and put it in the web?' 'I will,' she said, and went

outdoors to search for a small moth. The cold air of the mountain night struck her body with its sudden impact, and she looked up at the night flowing away from her, leaving her feeling as though she were standing in the doorway of a vast and empty hall. The hills were a dark circle all around, and the mist lay thick and heavy on the meadow. Fireflies darted about, winking and flashing silently, and she was surprised to see how high they sometimes flew. Occasionally one would leave its greenish light burning for a moment as it flew, and simulate a tiny meteor. She caught a moth and brought it to the window.

'I hate to do this,' she said, 'what shall I do?' Inside she saw his strangely pale face behind the pane, and he said, 'Just throw it at the web — not too hard, of course.' 'Gee, I hate to do this,' she said, feeling the soft body of the moth in her hands and its ineffectual wings beating against her fingers; but she threw the moth gently at the web, and said, 'Hurray, I'm glad it got away!' as it fell off the web; then she said, 'Oh,' for the moth in falling was caught by the lower part of the web, and there it hung fluttering and pulling mightily away. 'Look!' he said, and she saw the spider slide down its fireman's pole and seize the moth with all its eight legs at once, and she saw its sharp-pointed legs seemingly thrust into the moth's soft body again and again with the rapid technique of long practice, as it turned the miller round and round. She came into the house to watch with him, and said, 'I feel perfectly awful doing that — but I suppose spiders have to eat.' 'Why?' he said. She did not answer, but instead she saw his intent interest in the cruel performance, and felt for it the same disgust she felt for the brutal spider and its ways; and then she went inside.

When he came in he found her lying on the couch in the dark — and he stretched himself beside her * * * She suffered him to woo her for awhile, and then turned into his arms and gave him kiss for kiss out of the warmth of her deep love for him, but even while they loved, his mind was far away, and he could remark the softened edges of the moonlit room, and the dying coals in the hearth, and the fireflies

tapping against the windowpane, and he heard the kittens playing on the floor. * * * and he lay helpless and palpitant in her arms, breathing against her face upon the pillow. Then he rose, and as she watched him her mind assumed a strange relationship to her heart, and for the first time she felt impersonal in his presence, and could watch his movements unprejudiced by her affection for him and the long months that were between them and the inception of their love. She saw him pick up his clothes from the floor and turn the legs rightside out again, and put his feet in his slippers, and though she stood in the shadow of the fireplace she smiled, for she knew just how he would look in his shirt and no trousers. She saw him pick up her clothes, and wondered if he'd shake them out the way he had his own, or throw them carelessly aside upon a chair. She sighed. He lit the lamp, and she wondered if he'd remember the loose piece that came off with the chimney, and was pleased to see he did, although she knew he'd only seen it once.

'No wick?' he had said, and his voice was still and pleasant in her ears; 'ah yes — what's that! — oh, kittens asleep in the chair' — He poked the fire up and laid on more wood, took the kittens in his lap and sat looking at the fire. 'Humph!' he said irrelevantly; and she remembered, looking at his chin against the light, that he had said, 'I have too much nose and not enough chin,' but she found his chin good, and reflected that all chins looked weak relaxed, and she had a momentary access of pity for all the poor men who must get tired keeping their chins thrust out to simulate a firm determination, as though they believed their wills could shape their destinies. I wonder if he'll ever understand? she thought — I wonder if he could? and for a moment she played with the idea of killing herself, so he might understand. Oh, I would willingly kill myself a thousand times a day, if I thought that understanding would descend upon him suddenly and surely. No I wouldn't, she thought; simply living should make him understand more than ever death could. God is in every man the same, she thought, and if knowledge comes

it must be born of sorrow. Oh, she thought — and tears sprang to her eyes — Why must wisdom come sorrowing . . . wisdom is love and love is wisdom — there is no hope, she thought, for love to come rejoicing — no hope. . . .

Sitting alone now in the armchair by the fire, his body lax and dull and his mind borne down by his body, he was aware that she was lying and looking at his profile in the firelight, and though he felt he looked old and worn and a bit thin about the ribs, and though he was conscious that his profile could have been distinctly improved by a little more chin, still he formulated the conscious yet unspoken challenge — To hell with you — do you think I give a damn if you are looking at me? His feminine mind could hear the criticism her mind was turning over, yet somehow he felt too worn and tired to move an inch to soften criticism, and he felt, Well what of it? let it be all over now, if you like — the thing has gone too far now for me to court you with artlessly assumed advantageous postures, sharp sidewise glances and studied attitudes. You've seen my body in every possible pose at every time of day or night — why would I shrink from this ultimate scrutiny and deprive your prying mind of this opportunity to find fault? If this vision end it all, I am content. So he stayed as he was, his face and thin arms silhouetted in the flickering firelight, and he looked into the fire and listened to the river, and coaxed the elusive peace he'd sought so long, until it seeped coyly, drop by soporific drop, into his mind. . . .

'God!' she said, 'I'd like to paint you now!' Then he laughed; and when she asked him why he'd laughed, he would not say he was ashamed of the misunderstanding his mind had erected while he sat; he simply said, 'I'm tired,' and wondered at his strange reply. 'Why don't you go to bed, darling?' she said, 'I'll make your bed,' and she rose and went into the separate bedroom, while he put on his bathrobe and went outdoors again, to brush his teeth. He looked into the mirror tacked on the back of the house, and saw his pale face framed by the dark green, moonlit foliage on the hill behind the house, and he

turned, brushing his teeth, to look at the hill. Two bright eyes looked at him from over near the garbage-pit, and the mist had closed down about the house and stirred perceptibly with the cold breeze from the circling hills. He looked once more up at the stars and went indoors, latching the screen-door and feeling his way through the dark rooms; he bent to kiss her face, then went into his room. 'Good night,' she said. He felt something touch his foot and, bending down, picked up the little kitten and put it in his bed and climbed inside. Lying quietly, he stroked the kitten, which had crawled under the covers and lay beside his legs. He lay and looked out the window at the fireflies and the moonlight on the birch trees behind the house, and heard the quiet rushing of the stream — so he turned over and hid his face in the pillow, and lay listening to the beating of his heart, and the vibrant, steady purring of the kitten.

She could not close her eyes for quite a while — and even when she did, she saw the spider's web stretched across the dark field of her vision, and the spider in it, moving daintily on dancing-teacher legs. It had bright eyes. So she raised her lids again and lay staring at the ceiling, and the moonlight streaming in the screened window, and the silver face of the mist pressed against the pane, looking in. Far off on the state road, a motor-car was droning rhythmically. . . .

Rest Cure

BY KAY BOYLE

(From *Story*)

HE sat in the sun with the blanket about him, considering with his hands lying out like emaciated strangers before him, that to-day the sun would endure a little longer. Certainly it would survive until the trees below the terrace effaced it, towards four o'clock, like opened parasols. A crime it had been, the invalid thought, turning his head this way and that, to have ever built up one house before another in such a way that one man's habitation cast a shadow upon another's. The whole sloping coast should have been left a wilderness with no order to it, stalked and leafed with the great strong trunks and foliage of these parts. Cactus plants with petals a yard wide and yucca tongues as thick as elephant trunks were sullenly and viciously flourishing all about the house. Upon the terrace had a further attempt at nicety and precision been made: there his wife had seen to it that geraniums were potted into the wooden boxes that stood along the wall.

From his lounging chair he could reach out and, with no effort beyond that of raising the skeleton of his hand, finger the parched stems of the geraniums. The south, and the Mediterranean wind, had blistered them past all belief. They bore their rosy top-knots or their soiled white flowers balanced upon their thick Italian heads. There they were, within his reach, a row of weary washerwomen leaning back from the villainous descent of the coast. What parched scions had thrust forth from their stems now served to obliterate in part the vision of the sun. With arms akimbo they surrounded him — thin burned Italian women with their meagre bundles of dirty linen on their heads. One after another, with a flicker of irritation for his wife lighting his eye, he fingered them at the waist a moment, and then snapped

off each stem. One after another he broke their stalks in two and dropped them away on to the pavings beneath his lounging chair. When he had finished off what plants grew within his reach, he lay back exhausted, sank, thin as an archer's bow, into the depths of his cushions.

'They kept the sun off me,' he was thinking in absolution.

In spite of the garden and its vegetation, he would have the last drops of sun. He had closed his eyes, and there he lay looking straight ahead of him into the fathomless black pits of his lids. Even here, in the south, in the sun even, the coal-mines remained. His nostrils were sick with the smell of them, and on his cheeks he felt lingering the slipping mantle of the English fog. He had not seen the mines since he was a young man; but nothing he had ever done between would alter them. There he sat in the sun with his eyes closed, looking into their depths.

Because his father had been a miner, he was thinking, the black of the pits had put some kind of blasphemy on his own blood. He sat with his eyes closed looking directly into the blank awful mines. Against their obscurity he set the icicles of one winter when the war was on, when he had spent his twilights seeking for pine-cones under the tall trees in the woods behind the house. In Cornwall. What a vision! How beautiful that year, and many other years, might have been had it not been for the sour thought of war. Every time his heart had lifted for a hillside or a wave, or for the wind blowing, the thought of the turmoil going on had beset and stricken him. It had lain like a burden on his conscience every morning when he was coming awake. The first light moments of day coming had warned him that despite the blood rising in his body, it was no time to rejoice. The war. Ah, yes, the war. After the mines, it had been the war. Whenever he had believed for half a minute in man, then he had remembered that the war was going on.

For a little while one February, it had seemed that the colours set out in Monte Carlo, facing the Casino, would obliterate for ever the angry memories his heart had stored away. The great mauve, white, and deep royal purple bouquets had thrived

a week or more, as if rooted in his eyes. Such banks and beds of richly petalled flowers set thick as thieves or thicker on the cultivated lawns conveyed the wish. Their artificial physiognomies masked the earth as well as he would have wished his own features to stand guard before his spirit. The invalid lifted his hand and touched his beard. His mouth and chin, he thought with cunning satisfaction, were marvellously concealed.

The sound of his wife's voice speaking in the room that opened behind him on to the terrace roused him a little as he sat pondering in the sun. She seemed to be moving from one long window to another, arranging flowers in the vases, for her voice would come across the pavings, now strong and close, now distant as if turned away, and she was talking to their guest about some sort of shrub or fern. A special kind, the like of which she could find nowhere on the Riviera. It thrived in the cool brisk fogs of their own land, she was saying. Her voice had turned towards him again and was ringing clearly across the terrace.

'Those are beautiful ones you have there now,' said the voice of the gentleman.

'Ah, take care!' cried out his wife's voice, somewhat dimmed as though she had again turned towards the room. 'I was afraid you had pierced your hand,' she said in a moment.

When the invalid opened his eyes, he saw that the sun was even now beginning to glimmer through the upper branches of the trees, was lolling along the prosperous dark upper boughs as if in preparation for descent. Not yet, he thought, not yet. He raised himself on his elbows and scanned the sky. Scarcely three-thirty, surely, he was thinking. The sun can't be going down at once.

'The sun can't be going down yet awhile, can it?' he called out to the house.

He heard the gravel of the pathway sparkling and spitting out from under the soles of their feet as they crossed it, and then his wife's heels and the boots of the guest struck and advanced across the paving stones.

'Oh, oh, the geraniums — ' said his wife suddenly by his side.

The guest had raised his head and stood squinting up at the sun.

‘I should say it was going down,’ he said after a moment.

He had deliberately stepped before the rays of it and stood leaning back against the terrace-wall. His solid grey head had served to cork the sunlight. Like a wooden stopper, thought the invalid, painted to resemble a man: With the nose of a wooden stopper. And the sightless eyes. And the creases when he speaks or smiles.

‘But think what it must be like in Paris now,’ said the gentleman. ‘I don’t know how you feel, but I can’t find words to say how grateful I am for being here.’ The guest, thought the invalid as he surveyed him, was very conscious of being a guest — of accepting meals, bed, tea, society — and his smile was permanently set beneath his nose.

‘Of course you don’t know how I feel,’ said the invalid. He lay looking sourly up at his guest. ‘Would you mind moving out of the sun?’ As the visiting gentleman skipped out of the way, the invalid cleared his throat, dissolved the little pellet of phlegm which had leapt to being on his tongue so as not to spit before them, and sank back into his chair.

‘The advantage — or rather *one* of the advantages of being a writer,’ said the visiting gentleman with a smile, ‘is that he can settle down wherever the fancy takes him. Now a publisher —’

‘Why be a publisher?’ said the invalid in irritation. He was staring again into the black blank mines.

His wife was squatting and stooping about his chair, gathering up in her dress the butchered geraniums. She said not a word, but crouched there picking them carefully up, one by one. By her side had appeared a little covered basket, and within it rattled a pair of castanets.

‘I am sure I can very easily turn these into slips,’ she said gently, as if speaking to herself. ‘A little snip in the right place and they’ll be as good as new.’

‘You can make soup out of them,’ said the invalid bitterly. ‘What’s in the basket,’ he said, ‘making a noise?’

'Oh, a *langouste*!' cried out his wife. She had just remembered. 'We bought you a *langouste*, alive, at the Beausoleil market. It's as lively as a rigl'

The visiting gentleman burst into laughter. The invalid could hear him gasping with enjoyment by his side.

'I can't bear them alive,' said the invalid testily. He lay listening curiously to the animal rattling his jaws and clawing under the basket's lid.

'Oh, but with mayonnaise!' cried his wife. 'To-morrow!'

'Why doesn't Mr. What-do-you-call-him answer the question I put him?' asked the invalid sourly. His mind was possessed with the thought of the visiting man. 'I asked him why he was a publisher,' said the invalid. What a viper, what a felon, he was thinking, to come and live on me and not give me the satisfaction of a quarrel! He was not a young man, thought the invalid, with his little remains of greying hair, but he had all the endurance and patience of a younger man in the presence of a master. All the smiling and bowing, thought the invalid with contempt, and all the obsequious ways. The man was standing so near to his chair that he could hear his breath whistling through his nostrils. Maybe his eyes were on him, the invalid was thinking. It gave him a turn to think that he was lying there exposed in the sun where the visitor could examine him pore by pore. Hair by hair could the visitor take him in and record him.

'Oh, I beg your pardon,' said the gentleman. 'I'm afraid I owe you an apology. You see, I'm not accustomed to it.'

'To what?' said the invalid sharply. He had flashed his eyes open and looked suspiciously into the publisher's face.

'To seeing you flat on your back,' said the gentleman promptly.

'You covered that over very nicely,' said the invalid. He clasped his hands across his sunken bosom. 'You meant to say something else. You meant to say DEATH,' said the invalid calmly. 'I heard the first letter of it on your tongue.'

He lay back in his chair again with his lids fallen. He could distinctly smell the foul fumes of the pits.

'Elsa,' he said, as he lay twitching in the light, 'I would like

some champagne. JUST BECAUSE,' he said sitting up abruptly, 'I've written a few books doesn't mean that you have to keep the truth about me to yourself.'

His wife went off across the terrace, leaving the two men together.

'Don't make a mistake,' said the invalid smiling grimly. 'Don't make any mistake. I'm not quite finished. Not QUITE. I still have a little more to write about,' he said. 'Don't you fool yourself, my dear.'

'Oh, I flatter myself that I don't,' said the gentleman agreeably. 'I'm convinced there's an unlimited amount still to come. And I hope to have the honour of publishing some of it. I'm counting on that, you know.' He ended on a playful note and looked coily at the invalid. But every spark of life had suddenly expired in the ill man's face.

'I didn't know the sun would be off the terrace so soon,' he said blankly. His wife had returned and was opening the bottle, carefully and without error, with the end of her pliant thumb. The invalid turned on his side and regarded her: a great strong woman whom he would never forget, never, nor the surprisingly slim crescent of her flexible thumb. All of her fingers, he lay thinking as he watched her, were soft as skeins of silk, and tied in at the joints and knuckles by invisible satin bands of faintest rose. And there was the visiting gentleman hovering about her, with his 'oh-let-me-please-mrs.-oh-do-let-me-now.' But her grip on the neck of the bottle was as tenacious as a snake's. She lifted her head, smiled, and shook it at their guest.

'Oh, no,' she said, 'I'm doing beautifully.'

Just as she spoke the cork flew out and hit the gentleman square in the forehead. After it streamed a geyser of purest gold.

'Oh, oh, oh,' cried the invalid. He held out his hands to the golden spray. 'Oh, pour it here!' he cried. 'Oh, buckets of it going! Oh, pour it over me, Elsa!'

The colour had flown into Elsa's face and she was laughing. Softly and breathlessly she ran from glass to glass. There in the

stems played the clear living liquid, like a fountain springing upward. Ah, that, ah, that, in the inwards of a man, thought the invalid joyfully! Ah, that, springing again and again in the belly and heart! There in the glass it ran, cascaded in needle-points the length of his throat, went whistling to his pulses.

The invalid set down his empty glass.

'Elsa,' he said gently, 'could I have a little more champagne?'

His wife had risen with the bottle in her hand, but she looked doubtfully at him.

'Do you really think you should?' she asked.

'Yes,' said the invalid. He watched the unbelievably pure stuff flowing out all over his glass. 'Yes,' he said. 'Of course. Of course, I should.'

A sweet shy look of love had begun to arch in his eyes.

'I'd love to see the *langouste*,' he said gently. 'Do you think you could let him out and let me see him run around?'

Elsa set down her glass and stooped to lift the cover of the basket. There was the green armoured beast lifting its eyes, as if on hinges, to examine the light. Such an expression he had seen before, thought the invalid immediately. There was a startling likeness in those small audacious eyes. Such a look had there been in his father's eyes: that look, and the long smooth moustaches drooping across the wee clefted chin, gave the *langouste* such a look of his father that he exclaimed aloud:

'Be careful,' said Elsa. 'His claws are tied, but still —'

'I must have him out,' said the invalid. He gripped the *langouste* firmly about the hips. He looks like my father, he was thinking. I must have him out where I can see.

In spite of its shackles, the animal contrived to wave his wide pinions in the air as the invalid lifted him up and set him on the rug across his knees. There was the same line of sparkling dew-like substance pearling the *langouste's* lip, the same weak disappointed lip, like the eagle's lip, and the bold suspicious eye. Across the sloping shoulders of the beast lay a sprinkling of brilliant dust, as black as coal dust and quite as luminous. Just as his father had looked coming home at night, with the

coal dust showered across his shoulders like a deadly mantle. Just such a deadly cloak of quartz and mica and the rooted roots of fern. Even the queer blue toothless look of his father about the jaws. The invalid took another deep swallow of champagne and let it seep quietly through his flesh and blood. Then he lifted his hand and stroked the *langouste* gently. You've never counted, he was thinking mildly. I've led my life very well without you in it. You better go back to the mines where you belong.

When he lifted up the *langouste* to peer into his face, the arms of the beast fell ludicrously open as if he were seeking to embrace the ailing man. He could see his father very well in him, coming home with the coal dirt all over him in the evening, standing by the door that opened in by halves, opening first the upper half and then the lower, swaying a little as he felt for the latch of the lower half of the door. With the beer he had been drinking, or the dew of the Welsh mist shining on his long moustaches. The invalid gave him a gentle shake and set him down again.

I got on very well without you, he was thinking. He sipped at his champagne and regarded the animal upon his knees. As far as I was concerned. As far as I was concerned you need never have been my father at all. Slowly and warily the wondrous eyes and feelers of the beast moved in distrust across the invalid's lap and bosom. A lot of good you ever did me, he was thinking. As he watched the *langouste* groping about as if in darkness, he began to think of the glowing miner's lamp his father had worn strapped upon his brow. Feeling about in the dark and choking to death underground, he was thinking impatiently. I might have been anybody's son. The strong shelly odour of the *langouste* was seasoning the air.

'I've got on very well without you,' he was thinking bitterly. From his wife's face he gathered that he had spoken aloud. The visiting gentleman looked into the depths of his glass of champagne.

'Don't misunderstand me,' said the guest with a forbearing smile. 'I'm quite aware of the fact that, long before you met

me, you had one of the greatest publics and following of any living writer —

The invalid looked in bewilderment at his wife's face and at the face of the visiting man. If they scold me, he thought, I am going to cry. He felt his underlip quivering. Scold me! he thought suddenly in indignation. A man with a beard! His hand fled to his chin for confirmation. A man with a beard, he thought with a cunning evil gleam narrowing his eye.

'You haven't answered my question,' he said aggressively to the visitor. 'You haven't answered it yet, have you?'

His hand had fallen against the hard brittle armour of the *langouste's* hide. There were the eyes raised to his and the canny feelers lifted. His fingers closed for comfort about the *langouste's* unwieldy paw. Father, he said in his heart, father, help me. Father, father, he said, I don't want to die.

Tabloid News

BY LOUIS BROMFIELD

(From *Cosmopolitan*)

HOMER DILWORTH was born in 1881 and they hanged him by the neck until dead only last Tuesday, so he was only fifty when he died, and in the prime of life. He was younger than most men of fifty. He was solider, rosier, clearer-eyed. His voice was alive, and his skin was soft and young. And the funny thing is that he was younger at fifty than he was at forty.

He was even younger when he died than he was at thirty. He'd always been rather sour-faced and dry and bony, like a handsome tree withered by blight. And then, all at once, when he was forty-eight he suddenly turned young.

In a way, to have hanged him was worse than killing most young fellows, because Homer had his youth so late in life. He turned young all of a sudden, like an old apple tree blossoming carelessly in October.

His parents were respectable folk and very religious. The old woman was a little queer, and they lived in a little town called Hanover, and Homer was an only child. 'Way back when he was a boy, little towns like that didn't have theatres or movies or automobiles or radios, and everything centred about the church. There was going to church on Sunday, and church sociables and strawberry festivals, and then, about once a year, a big revival meeting, when everything broke loose.

It was like that in Hanover. They were awful strict but there was just as much love-making went on there as anywhere else, only they made it nasty in Hanover.

His mother and father wanted Homer, their only son, to be a preacher, and Homer thought he wanted to be one. He took it all seriously and talked a lot about purity and the devil. He

used to harangue me a good deal. We had a kind of Damon and Pythias friendship.

The other night I was thinking back over all his story and I remembered a few things, mostly in pictures, the way you remember things when you're beginning to grow old. There was a swimming hole about three miles from town where we used to go swimming together. It was a clear stream and in the middle of a wide pasture it spread out into a kind of pond.

A couple of hundred feet away there was a low hill with a house on it, but nobody lived in the house and it was falling into ruin. It was partly log cabin and partly clapboard, and all the windows were broken and the bushes had grown up high around it.

There was a story about the house which happened before my time. They said that a certain old man known as Elder Sammis had lived there once and that he'd beaten his daughter to death when he found that she'd got into trouble.

He didn't mean to beat her as bad as that, but when he found she was dead he put her body in a box under the bed and ran away, and they found the dead girl there two weeks later. They tried to catch him but they never did, because about a month later he jumped off a river boat and was drowned.

So nobody lived in the house, and everybody was scared of it, so there wasn't any reason why we couldn't swim there in peace.

After Homer was hanged, one of the pictures I remembered was that swimming hole on an afternoon in early June when he'd come over from the Theological Seminary to spend Sunday with his folks. The water was clear and the sunlight was hot, and after we'd swum about a bit and splashed at each other like a couple of kids, we got out of the water and lay on the grass and talked.

*

We lay there almost in the shadow of the empty old home and for a long time we didn't say anything. It was beautiful, with the sun on our bodies and the soft grass under us and a warm breeze blowing over us.

A calf came up and sniffed at me and went away again, and it struck me all of a sudden how beautiful Homer was, lying there in the sun. He was like the ideas some people have about the Greeks, which aren't true probably but are kind of idealized.

That afternoon, he was preachier than ever. He went after me for going on buggy rides at night with old man Fisher's girl, and for not believing in God. And he began to hash over a lot of ideas about purity that didn't make any sense, and all the time I wanted to get up and laugh and dance, because it seemed so funny to hear all that claptrap coming out of the mouth of a young fellow, sitting on the grass beside that clear stream.

I wanted to laugh but I kept my mouth shut, and then he said something that made me want to cry. I'm not emotional or sentimental, but I guess it must have been the feel of the grass and the sun and the warm breeze that made me feel that way. He said, 'I don't care for myself, Buck. It's because when I go to heaven I want to find you there, too.'

And then the sun disappeared. It had slipped down behind the desolate Sammis house and was shining through the empty holes where the windows used to be, and the breeze wasn't so warm any more and I began to pull on my clothes; and then Homer, seeing that all his talk wasn't having any effect, began to dress, too.

After we dressed we sat around for a while and Homer said presently, 'Let's go up and look through old Sammis's house.'

We'd never done it as kids on account of the story that Hester Sammis's ghost was always in the house. I don't believe in ghosts, and that afternoon I knew for the first time that it wasn't really the thought of ghosts which had scared me but something else. I knew that it was because of the sadness that clung to the old house itself.

We didn't go into the house, but all the way home he kept kidding me about being afraid of ghosts and I didn't try to explain to him. Lately, I've been thinking I was wrong not to have talked about it and that if I'd tried as hard to convert him

as he tried to convert me, they mightn't have hanged him last Tuesday.

The trouble was that I was finding my heaven right here on earth and not worrying much about what happened afterward, and he was afraid of this earth and worrying himself about the next and he wanted me to be in heaven with him. I guess he cared a lot more for me than I knew in those days.

It was that afternoon that he told me he was going to get married as soon as he was out of college. I was glad, because I thought it would be good for him.

But I didn't see the girl until after they were married and came back to Hanover to live. He didn't become a preacher, after all, because his uncle died and left his hardware store to Homer's father, and Homer's father thought it over and decided the cash drawer of a good-paying hardware store was better than the rewards of saving souls later on.

So Homer came back to Hanover to live and set up his wife in a house alongside his parents' house and took over the hardware store.

The hardware business flourished because Homer was honest and reliable and sold only the best hardware, and his father kind of looked after the business, because Homer wasn't very good about things like that. He was really romantic, and all that squeezing into a hard pious shell couldn't change that in him. It was always bursting out somewhere.

After he got married he took to reading all kinds of romantic novels like *The Three Musketeers*. He really wanted to travel to places alone, looking for adventures, but he'd got himself married when he was twenty-one and his wife had twins, and after that there was a baby about every eighteen months until there were five, so he couldn't well do anything but look after the store and take care of the children when his wife Etta was doing church work.

And his wife wasn't much. I'm kind of an idealist, and before he got married, I always pictured him taking up with a woman who was as fine and beautiful as himself. There was something

wonderful in the idea of a beautiful girl marrying such a handsome fellow as Homer and in their having a lot of beautiful children.

But when he came back and invited me to supper one night to meet Etta, I felt kind of sick when I saw her. I knew right away that Homer had been up to his old tricks. He'd married the kind of woman he'd been brought up to marry and not the kind he'd been meant by Nature to marry.

She didn't take to me and I certainly didn't like her, and after that first meeting, Homer and I began to see less and less of each other. She was the kind of woman who wasn't going to let her husband have any friends.

It wasn't just women. She wouldn't let him have any men friends, either. And I guess she thought I was the devil himself, so she wouldn't even let Homer go on trying to save my soul so I could be in heaven with him.

Once she buttonholed me on the street and called me a sot and harangued me until I got away from her, and after that Homer was ashamed and he'd walk around a block or go into a store if he saw me coming. I guess there's lots of women like her in America.

Of course, with all that going on, she didn't have much time for housework. The children were always sick and the dishes were never washed, and Homer used to have to stay at home to look after the children and take care of the house while she went to meetings and travelled about lecturing and haranguing.

I always thought he had too much character to do things like that, but I guess she just wore him down with abuse and whining and nagging. But he did have enough character to preserve a kind of dignity in spite of everything. He just gave up going out anywhere and lived between his house and the hardware store. He was crazy about his children.

But marriage didn't do him much good. Instead of growing fat on it like most men, he seemed to grow dry. He looked older than he was and there were hard lines in his face that oughtn't to have been there, and I only found out the reason when he

sent for me at the Mitchellville jail after he got into trouble.

When I got word that he wanted to see me, I could have died of surprise, because he hadn't seen me in fifteen years for more than long enough to say 'Howdydo' when we passed in the street. I guess his mind must have gone back a long way, beyond Etta and all she'd done to him, to that day when we went swimming together for the last time and lay on the soft grass behind the haunted Sammis house.

Sitting there in the cell of the Mitchellville jail, he told me all about Etta and about everything else, too. After the fifth child was born, she told him the doctor said if she had another child it would kill her, so they couldn't live together as man and wife any more. And that happened before Homer was thirty. So for seventeen years they lived together as if they weren't married.

The summer that Homer was forty-eight Etta said she had to have a rest because she was all worn out. Homer didn't want to go away but she kept nagging him, and at last he left the hardware store with his clerk and his oldest boy and they went up to La Vallette. He was looking bad himself, all grey and dried up.

He hardly spoke to anybody any more, and just lived between his home and the store. He'd just given up all his old friends, and somehow he'd got all bitter inside.

La Vallette is a little town up on the lake where all sorts of religious cranks go for a cheap rest. There are some cottages and three or four cheap hotels and a wooden tabernacle.

Homer and Etta were just like all the others. Etta, of course, knew most of the dreary lot. She'd made herself into a kind of celebrity. They all knew the crusader, Mrs. Etta Dallet Dilworth. I guess she enjoyed it a great deal, holding court in a rocking-chair on the hotel porch and speaking now and then at the tabernacle, but Homer got a bit fed up being just *Mister* Etta Dallet Dilworth, and he took to going for long walks along the lake front.

It was a desolate country but beautiful in a wild way. There

were miles and miles of dunes with the whitest sand glittering in the sunlight. And here and there were marshes and inlets where wild birds settled.

Homer went walking along the shore in and out among the dunes, skirting the marshes. At first he'd go off for an hour or two, and then he began to go off in the morning and stay until lunch time, and then one day he began taking a box lunch with him.

He'd been unhappy for so long that he liked to get away from people and hide. I guess getting away from Etta and the pack of gabblers who surrounded her was kind of a relief, too. And being away all day like that got him to thinking.

It's dangerous for a man of forty-eight to think too much about his own happiness, especially when he's had a life like Homer's. And the marshes and the lake and the sunlight and the wild birds began to do things to him.

He said it was like slipping backwards. He kept going back and back until he got to feeling a little the way he used to feel when we went swimming together. And one day he found himself taking off all his clothes and lying down on the clean white sand among the dunes to eat his lunch. And all at once he was kind of frightened.

*

It was the first time the sun had touched his body since that day he lay on the grass by the haunted house, and the feel of it began to do funny things to him. He sat up and looked at his body and saw suddenly that it wasn't old and soft and fat. It was dry and the muscles were sharp and hard but not rounded the way they'd been when he was young. But it struck him suddenly that he wasn't old. He was forty-eight, though, and wouldn't have many more years of health and vigour. And the feel of the sun and the soft warm breeze made him kind of dizzy.

He said he felt as if he was beginning to grow all over again inside himself. Suddenly he saw that he was happy for the first time in twenty years; but that frightened him, and he began

to be afraid of sin again, and he got up quickly and put on his clothes.

He tried to give up his long walks but when he stayed at the hotel all he saw were gabbling old women and skinny men, and soon he began going off again for the day among the dunes, and after a day or two he began taking off his clothes again and lying in the sun.

He began to grow tanned all over. His muscles began to grow round and plump and solid again.

He felt happier, and once or twice he got up at four in the morning to go out to the lake and see the sun rise. The sun became the centre of all his existence. It was kind of as if he had a rendezvous every day with the sun out there among the white dunes.

Sometimes on cloudy days he thought he was going crazy, but as soon as the sun came out he felt all right again, and sure of himself. After a time, he began to be troubled because the more he thought of it, the more it seemed impossible ever to go back to live at Hanover in that untidy house that Etta kept so badly.

Etta noticed that he went off alone a good deal and she began to nag him about leaving her alone so much and not going to the tabernacle. But he didn't seem to mind even that. He just didn't hear her, and managed to endure it until he could escape to the dunes.

One day she made a terrible scene in the dining-room because she said he was being too kind to the waitress and looked at her too often.

After it was over she went to the management and demanded that the girl be discharged, but the management wouldn't do it because Etta couldn't prove the girl had done anything at all. They couldn't discharge a girl just because she 'looked' at a man. They just transferred her to another table and put an ugly old woman to wait on him and Etta.

After that he really took to noticing the girl for the first time,

and he saw that she was big and blonde and voluptuous, and in spite of himself, he began stealing glances at her across the room. Once or twice she saw him and smiled. He knew that what he was doing was sinful and tried to put her out of his mind.

Etta grew more and more difficult. He said he thought it was because she couldn't bear to see him looking well and happy. And one day she said she'd told the hotel she was going to leave at the end of the week.

The idea terrified him because it meant the end of the only happiness he'd known since he married her, and it meant a return to the awful house in Hanover. He'd been so used to doing what she wanted that he didn't say anything, but that afternoon while he was lying in the sun, he made up his mind that he wasn't going to leave and go back to Hanover. As he dressed himself, he made up the speeches he was going to say to her, repeating them over and over to himself in the silence of the dunes to give himself courage.

He was walking home through the dunes, kicking the white sand and thinking how he meant to defy Etta, when he heard a curlew crying, and looking up to see it, he saw something else. Just ahead of him, lying in a hollow between two dunes, he saw the figures of a man and woman. They were asleep in the sun.

At first he wanted to run, and then he was overcome suddenly by a return of his old bitterness. He was outraged and indignant. And then he saw that, like himself, they had thought themselves alone among the dunes because it was a spot never visited by the people who came to La Vallette.

He tried to run away and could not. He was only able to stand there, his feet fixed in the white sand, staring.

Suddenly he was no longer shocked. These two people were like himself. They weren't like Etta. Like him, they worshipped the sun!

He did not know how long he stood there. The sun slipped down toward the blue lake and the girl stirred, and he saw then for the first time that the Venus of the sands with the golden hair was the waitress over whom Etta had made the scene.

He turned and ran, fearful lest they should discover him, and as he ran he knew that he meant to stay on at La Vallette, and that maybe he would never go back to Hanover at all. When he got home he went to Etta and told her he meant to stay, and when she couldn't find out any reason she tried everything to gain control over him again. She even flung the washbowl on the floor and broke it and dashed her head against the door, but all her hysterics seemed to have no effect upon him.

That night he dared not look for the waitress, because he saw her in a new way and looking at her became intolerable to him.

I imagine she was good-hearted and easy-going and meant well to everybody, and was just born to be good to men and make them happy. She felt sorry for Homer, I guess, being married to a dried-up whiner like Etta.

*

Anyway whenever he did look at her, she looked back and smiled, and that set Homer to thinking of everything he'd missed and that he was forty-eight and pretty soon he'd be dead without ever having lived at all.

After that day when he went to walk he tried not to go past the place where he'd seen them lying in the sun among the white dunes, but always, in spite of anything he could do, he'd find himself moving toward the spot. Sometimes he found them there and sometimes he didn't. And they never knew that all the time there was someone watching their rendezvous.

And then one day on the street he saw the boy dressed in a shirt and an old pair of trousers and looking for all the world like himself thirty years ago, and when he asked who he was, they told him that the boy's name was Henry Landis and that he came to La Vallette in summer to take the baggage of the summer people to and from the train.

Then one day the boy disappeared, and Homer asked what had become of him, and they said he'd gone away because his mother had died in Appleton and that he wouldn't be back until next summer.

So Homer went out and bought a cheap hand bag and wrote

a note and put it inside and asked one of the waitresses to give it to Frieda, the big blonde girl.

Just before he died he told me that he thought he must have been going crazy all that time. Up to the very end he couldn't make out whether he'd been crazy all those years he'd been married to Etta and only began to be sane when he took to lying in the sun among the dunes.

At night he always went to the tabernacle with Etta, but that night right after the second hymn he told Etta he would have to get some air. So she stayed and he went outside and walked down to the boat landing, and there in the shadow of some bushes stood Frieda waiting for him and carrying the handbag he'd sent her.

At first he thought he was going to die of excitement and of fear. He began to shake all over. His teeth chattered and he waited for a little while till he got control of himself before he went forward to meet her.

For a long time they stood looking at each other in the darkness talking awkwardly about the cheap handbag and the moon. He said it was kind of as if all that he'd missed all these years had been rolled up and burst out of him at last. There was so much he wanted to say that he couldn't say anything at all.

They sat down on the grass and all he could do was sit and look at her. The moonlight came through the trees on her hair. I guess she was a pretty smart girl. The people I talked to at the trial told me so. She wasn't very bright and she didn't have any ambition or she could have had almost anything she wanted.

While he was looking at her, he suddenly remembered Etta sitting at the tabernacle waiting for him to return, and he said to Frieda, 'Will you meet me to-morrow afternoon?' And he told her where to meet him, among the dunes not very far from where he'd seen her and the boy.

He didn't sleep any that night and went off early to spend the day among the dunes. It was a brilliant day, late in September, with wonderful sunlight, but it seemed to him the time

would never pass until he'd see Frieda coming along the shore.

She came at last, dressed all in white in her waitress's clothes, with her gold hair shining against the blue lake.

And for the first time in his life Homer knew what it was to be free and happy. When he told me about it, it all sounded simple and beautiful. I wanted to cry.

Two days before the hotel closed, Etta came up from the front porch and found a note pinned to the pillow. It said that Homer had gone away and that she needn't try to look for him and that she'd never see him again. He wrote that he'd taken the money that was in the bank at Hanover and left her and the children the hardware store, which would keep them all well enough.

At first they thought he'd committed suicide and Etta fainted and screamed a good deal. They tried dragging the water by the boat-landing, but about six o'clock one of the waitresses said it wasn't any use because he'd run off with Frieda.

Then Etta screamed and fainted a lot more, and took the next train for Hanover, and about two days later the newspapers ran them to ground in a little town up in northern Michigan and printed a lot of stuff about the elopement, so they had to run away again. They kept running from town to town till the newspapermen got tired hounding them, and at last they disappeared.

Etta tried to have them arrested, but nobody could or would do anything about it. She wouldn't divorce him. She just got more and more righteous and martyred and worked harder than ever for Prohibition and the anti-cigarette law and a lot of stuff like that. It made an awful scandal in Hanover, but it died down pretty soon.

*

I was glad because I'd always wanted to see Homer have a little fun in life, but I couldn't say anything. He'd been a stranger to me for twenty years, all dried-up and sour from living with Etta. I couldn't understand how he did manage to do it until two years afterward when I opened the paper one morning and read that a girl called Frieda Hemyers had been killed with

some man and that Homer Dilworth, who had been living with her, was arrested for both murders; and a week later I got a letter from a town called Mitchellville, in Missouri, where they had him in jail.

It was from Homer himself, asking me to come and see him and help him. I went right off, and that was when he told me everything.

I expected to find a dried-up man on the verge of old age, but when they opened the door of the cell I saw a vigorous man of about thirty-five or forty. I couldn't have believed it was Homer except that he looked like himself when he was young.

He must have grown fifteen years younger since I last saw him on the street in Hanover. He was always a good-looking fellow and he'd got handsome again, just as I said, like an apple tree that suddenly blossoms in October.

And when he spoke, it was harder still to believe that he was Homer Dilworth.

He looked at me and sort of grinned and said, 'Well, Jim, I guess you thought I was the last person in the world you'd ever find in a fix like this.' I saw that he had a kind of manliness about him he'd never had even in the days before he married Etta, because then he was always kind of soft and good.

He told me to sit down on his cot. He didn't seem to be discouraged. He just said, 'I did it, Jim. I didn't mean to do it, but I did it. They can do with me whatever they like.'

The funny thing was that he didn't seem to care.

He told me he'd sent for me because I was the only one he knew who'd understand. It wasn't any good sending for church people because they'd just lecture him and pray over him, and he didn't want to see Etta, even if she would have come.

She never did come, and she wouldn't let any of the children come to see him. And in the two years since he'd run away with Frieda they'd had to go from place to place, so they'd never stopped anywhere long enough to make friends. In the end he went back thirty years, to that last afternoon we'd gone swimming together, and sent for me.

He told me all the story of what happened to him at La Vallette up to the time he ran off with Frieda, and then he told me what happened afterward — how they were followed from town to town by newspapermen, and then how they'd always get found out and be forced to move on. He said they'd been to twenty-seven little towns in two years.

He had the money he'd drawn out of the bank, and when that gave out he worked, sometimes as dishwasher, sometimes as farm hand, doing anything he could find to do. And he was happy all the time because Frieda was easy-going and good-natured.

He spoke about her as if she wasn't dead at all. Sometimes he was jealous of her, and once or twice they'd quarrelled when she spoke to a man younger than himself.

It seemed he was frightened of younger men. He knew that he was getting old and that some day he'd lose her to a younger man because she was still young. It got to be a kind of obsession with him.

And finally they came to that little town in Missouri, and nobody found them out. He had a job checking off grain bags and hogs at the river landing, and it looked as if they were going to be safe and happy at last, because there weren't even any men in the place more vigorous than himself.

They had a little house and were furnishing it from a furniture catalogue. And then one day he came home when she was out and found a letter addressed to 'Miss Frieda Hemyers care of Mrs. John Slade,' which was the name they were living under.

It was postmarked 'Appleton, Wisconsin,' and when he asked her about it she said it was from the boy who'd handled the baggage at the hotel in La Vallette, the same one he'd seen with her among the dunes. Later, when he asked her what was in it, she said she'd burned it, and told him there was nothing in it — the fellow only wanted to know how she was.

But the thing stuck in Homer's brain. It wasn't, he said, that he was jealous. He had a kind of funny affection for the boy, even though he'd never spoken to him.

He kind of felt that Frieda really belonged to the boy if he

wanted her. It was all mixed up in his head and he kept trying to think it out.

And then one day the river boat was a day late and he went back to the house an hour or two after he'd left it. He opened the back door but there wasn't anybody in and when he called Frieda's name she didn't answer, so he went to their bedroom and found the door was locked, and all at once he knew what had happened.

For a moment he just stood still, feeling that he was going to die. He turned cold all over, and then for a moment he couldn't see. It seemed to him that it was the end of everything, because he'd got to feel that all his life that went before was nothing at all and that he'd been alive only since he ran off with Frieda.

In his brain the thought was born that the only thing to do was to finish it then and there, and to finish it, he'd have to kill Frieda and the man who was in there with her, and then himself.

The funny thing was how clearly he remembered it all, because he was certainly insane at that moment. He took a chair and smashed down the door, and then, with a revolver, he just fired blindly into the dark room until the revolver clicked empty. And when he tried to shoot himself there wasn't any bullet left.

It was an awful moment when he stood there in the doorway. The emptiness of the pistol seemed to bring him to himself, and suddenly, because he was really a good man, he wanted to save them both.

But it was too late. Frieda was unconscious and dying, and the man was dead.

It was then that he discovered it was the boy who had handled the baggage at La Vallette. He'd come all the way to Missouri to find her and run off with her.

It made him sick, and the funny thing was that the remorse he felt wasn't so great because he'd killed two people, but because the two people were Frieda and the boy. If he'd known that Frieda had the boy with her, he'd have gone away quietly and left them together for ever.

They were young and love belonged to them. He was old and finished, and he was left alive. And it was terrible, too, that he'd killed the two people who had set him free. They were the two who had given him life and he'd killed them. For a moment he said he had a horrible feeling that instead of killing the boy, he shot himself as he was thirty years before.

After a long time he got up and laid the two bodies on the bed and covered them with a sheet, and then went into the kitchen and put his head into the oven of the stove and turned on the gas. One of the neighbours who ran in to borrow some eggs from Frieda found him there.

He wasn't dead yet. They dragged him out and brought him to, and then found the bodies.

I stayed with him at the trial and up to the very end.

He didn't make the least effort to save himself. If Frieda had been his wife they'd have let him off maybe with manslaughter, but of course, all their story came out at the trial and he didn't have a chance.

*

But Homer didn't give them any satisfaction. He was sorry he'd killed Frieda and the boy, but he wasn't repentant about anything else, and he was glad of the two years of happiness he'd had with Frieda. He just sort of smiled when the judge sentenced him.

I took his body back to Hanover and buried it alongside my grandfather, because Etta wouldn't have anything to do with it. In Hanover, he became a great Example. The wages of sin is death, they said, but they never said anything about the wages of the way Homer was brought up, or the wages of living with Etta.

Last week Martha and I drove out to Ontario to see about buying our winter apples and before I thought about it we were passing old Sammis's house. The roof had fallen in and it was almost hidden by bushes, and the pasture where Homer and I had lain in the sun was muddy and frozen. The cattle stood with their heads together and their tails toward the November wind.

A Day in the Country

BY WHIT BURNETT

(From *Story*)

How the Seine sinks slowly from the banks, leaving a gangrene spewed across the wrinkles of its stones, and the air lies lifeless over all of Paris in a hot summer mist, sultriness suffusing every living thing — Paris knows such strange white days. Stillness in the air, and the rank odour of ripe stored things, bursting for release. The mad whinny of the horses, stallions, hot-blooded, stamping through the litter in the market streets, or standing, now, at times, listless, unchewing, with their long heads sunk tiredly in their musty feed bags. . . . And from a squalid court in Belleville, the scream of some old woman — insane perhaps and bed-pent — sensing and foretelling the summer thunder yet to come. . . .

We sought the open air. The direct sun. Country.

Past Noisy-lé-Sec the heat mist lingered. The summer storm the night before had hardly changed the atmosphere. The sky was white and wide, and the train lurched through a stickiness. And then, at Enghien-les-Bains, over the trees across the lake, a spot of blue welled out. With it came the sun.

At L'Isle Adam we stepped from the train into a sweet contentment. Just a couple of hours, or less, outside of Paris, and the vague greyness of the city, its old buildings rearing darkly close together in smelly dampness, its shrieking traffic, and the summer fetidity of millions in decay — only a memory in the brightness and the freshness of the country day.

'One day off,' said my young friend, lifting her face to the high blue sky, 'and we pick such a beauty.'

'Yes,' I agreed, 'we have luck.'

She smiled, content. We are young . . . after all. She swung the small blue bag, freely, like a schoolgirl. We travel

light, always, since we have lived together. It is a rule, a feeling in us both perhaps that life should be a freer thing, unpulled down with baggage and dead things.

The Frenchmen, with their home-keeping wives and children, were walking on ahead of us. The fine sun, beating on their black clothes, slowed down their steps. They ambled slowly on, with their hands on their children's shoulders, or linked with their wives, or burdened, some, with baskets and bundles they'd brought from town.

We trailed along behind them.

There was no hurry. There is no hurry when the sun shines, brightly and freshly, and the good ground, dry and firm, makes each step natural, friendly, responsive to the union with the earth.

At the bridge we stopped and looked down into the stream.

The water was slow-moving and contentful. A distant point of the island, heavy with tremendous trees, jutting down into the stream, divided the Oise in two. Beyond the point was the main part of the river. A tug was lazily puffing up the current, towing a barge of sand.

'It is an effort to get out of Paris,' said my friend. 'A person stagnates. But the effort is worth it. We might be sitting there for ever on some terrace, just sitting . . . that damp, heavy heat. . . .'

Just sitting. . . .

We stood for a long time on the bridge. We leaned across the old stone parapet. The river without a ripple on its surface dreamed into an absence. Nothing. Only the fresh sun. Green. Tired eyes halted in their dance after movements. Arrested on a glitter in the stream.

The tugboat coughed a hoarse staccato. And we awoke into existence. We straightened up and walked across the bridge.

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The little town's main street, cobblestoned and clean, stretched onward into trees and sky. The street, at noon, was basking

in a sunny idleness. Hardly anyone was out. Shops, in the French lunch-hour fashion, were shut, and here and there, from the sidewalk, we smelled the good smell of freshly cooking food.

At a small café, whose sign said it had a garden in the rear, we stopped for an *apéritif*. It was time to eat. The rain the night before, heavier in L'Isle Adam than it had been in Paris, had battered the young trees in the garden. Leaves were lying rain-soaked on the tables. A pair of forlorn rabbits watched us from a coop. We were alone in the garden.

'This is not very cheerful,' said my friend. 'Let's go back to that nice *château* by the bridge. They must serve meals. I think I saw a sign.'

At the bridge we stopped again, naively drawn by the water. Water it was, country-clean — a river more like a river than the Seine, along whose dusty quays the Paris jobless lay stretched in the summer dirt, and under whose old bridges at night the city's winter-weary, dressed in remnants of clothes and patches of rags, seek a cold night's rest. Green things grew along the banks of the Oise, and here and there one could see, near the edges, even the rocks in the river bed.

The *château* was really an hotel, but only a miniature sign announced it. It was a gloomy looking building, tall and ancient. But the grounds were lush and quiet, deeply shaded by great trees higher than the house.

Two waiters in their white coats hovered around the tables.

From the garden the view gave expansively out across the stream, taking in, even, the sight of the little bathing beach across the shore, where an enterprising firm had erected a pavilion and cabins newly painted white and green. A radio at this new place, now and then on loud notes, scratched out raucousness.

Both waiters watched us, as we hesitated where to sit. Then they both moved toward us.

One was young, not much younger than myself, I thought, and tall, too. The other was middle-aged and, like most Frenchmen nowadays, short and small.

The tall youth, who seemed unusually pale, stood by silently. He recommended, when pressed for advice, the table d'hôte. He was smooth-shaven, serious, and reserved. He spoke a little English, and his French sounded foreign. We took him for a Swede.

The short waiter sauntered over, finally, to see if he could help out. He was a dark-skinned fellow whose quiet brown eyes indicated he had reached a certain age of pleasantness in casual dealings, of acceptance and philosophy. We took his suggestion, which was made in a leisurely, off-hand way, and started with fish.

'*Très bon,*' he offered, as I dipped the white meat in the sauce, '*n'est-ce pas? Ce poisson-là?*'

'Caught around here?' I asked.

'*Ah, non,*' the short man said, 'we don't catch fish like that around here.'

The wine glowed in our veins.

'In a strange place,' said my companion, as later we began on the steak, 'it is best, in the long run, just to go to the best place they have. In some small place you might get typhus . . . or something.'

'We will get plenty of typhus then in Russia,' I said. 'We won't find many best places in Russia.'

'Oh, I don't know,' she said. 'They are not so uncivilized. We will get a change. There will be tension there, too. Vitality.'

'When we go through Germany we must sample the beer.'

'Ask the tall waiter,' she suggested, 'about Germany. He looks blond and German.'

When the young man came with the salad, I told him we were planning a vacation. 'Are you, perhaps, German?' I asked.

He did not lift his head. But his answer was curt and quick, almost sullen.

'*Je suis Russe,*' he said. '*Vrai Russe.*'

The accent of the 'true Russian' chilled us through the course.

Around us, the deserted tables stood like white houses abandoned. It was Monday. We were the only patrons. The older

waiter, his folded napkin on his sleeve, strolled by again to see how things were going.

'Beau temps, aujourd'hui, hein?'

'Not so good last night, though,' he went on. 'Big wind. Lightning. Thunder. You saw the tree as you came in the drive?' The biggest tree on the island struck last night by lightning.'

We hadn't noticed it. We had come in on the outgoing circle of the drive. The tree, it seemed, was on the other curve.

The young man, standing quietly by, poured water in the glasses.

'Odd luck, too,' he said, suddenly, with his special accent. 'Fell between two great limousines. One was a Rolls-Royce,' he added, I thought, with pride.

My friend looked at me.

'If Rolls-Royces come in here,' she said, 'our bill will probably be a pretty one.'

It was raining so hard that motoring was impossible, the older man said. They told the story together. How the people had just got out of their cars and were on their way up the hotel steps, and then the loud crash came. They became quite animated in telling about the fall of the tree in the storm. The loud crash. And no one hurt. Not a soul. The biggest tree on the island. And not a single scratch on the cars.

'Miraculeuse!' we said.

'The Americans are going to Germany — *pour les vacances*,' the young waiter said to his colleague. *'Vous parlez l'Allemand, n'est-ce pas?'*

He withdrew to the kitchen.

* *'Nur ein wenig*,' the short one smiled at us.

'I learned a few words in the war,' he added.

Four years in the war, he said. Four years at the front.

'No,' he answered, 'I was hardly scratched. Just a little bullet wound here, in the fat of the hand.' He held out his palm. Intimate, stranger's flesh. A bullet, lead, ripping redly through. 'Never bothers, except sometimes just before a storm. *Il gratte*.'

He made a scratching gesture with his fingers. 'Then it itches like the devil.'

'My colleague here,' the Frenchman continued, 'he got a bullet in his knee. He still limps a little, see?'

The pale young man was coming toward us with the fruit. His left leg was bent a little inward and the drag was just perceptible.

'He wasn't in the war, though, was he?'

'Non,' the youth put in. 'Not in France. I was in the civil war — Russia. Later. That's the worst. Civil war. Brother against brother. That's the worst war.'

How old then?

'Sixteen,' he said.

We saw. On a horse, as a youth, young, and the head full of books, perhaps — or girls — and the beginnings of life and love. And a sword in the hand. Crowds out. Crowds around the food stores. Orders of the day. Sabres out. Riding. Charging. Knocking down people. Guns from barricades. Bullets. . . .

The youth seemed paler as we looked at him. His blue eyes were troubled, hurt perhaps, I thought, puzzled in his youth and his solitariness in the world. There was no fire in his voice. No ring of heroism.

'I got the rifle ball in my kneecap still,' he said. 'It is too hard to operate. They say better if it stay there.'

'Doesn't it bother you?' asked my friend.

'Only sometimes,' said the waiter.

'That depends,' said the older waiter, informatively, 'on the weather. Like me. *Ça gratte un peu, eh, quand le temps change?*' He looked toward the youth.

The younger waiter was preoccupied. He cleared the table in silence.

'Alors,' said the older man, '*Ça, c'est la guerre.* They will have a hard time getting me into another war.'

'Eh, so you think?' asked the youth. They had evidently talked of this before. They seemed to forget us.

'Oui,' said the waiter.

The youth piled plate on plate.

'*Les jeunes*,' said the older man to us, and smiled in his age, '*les jeunes sont toujours patriotiques*.'

The waiters watched us as we left the grounds. They nodded pleasantly, the long one with the saddened eyes, and the short Frenchman, as we looked back from the edge of the grounds. We were searching for the fallen tree. The older waiter, still smiling, pointed energetically on a little further. We signalled our thanks.

We found the tree stretched, in appalling death, across the roadway, its tremendous black trunk ripped with a wounded whiteness from the lightning.

. . . As we got into the tiny canoe and attempted to relax without tipping it over, the sun came down upon us strong. We drifted down stream into the deep main part of the river, until an empty tug, fast clipping the peaceful water, rolled off waves in our direction, and bounced us like a cork.

We pushed back frantically for the bend in the river. We are neither very good swimmers. The sun's glare made me a little giddy.

*

'There's a woman fishing.'

Around the bend, the river was placid as velvet. The greenery was deep and rich, like the foliage in the mystical paintings of the Customs Agent Rousseau.

'Got a bite, too,' I noticed.

We watched her fish, her eyes glued brightly on the float, and her wide straw hat turned back above her forehead. A jerk, and out came a minnow, four inches long. And then, in a few minutes, another little silver fish, flittering in the air, which she dropped into a pail in her boat.

She had rigged herself up comfortably, seated somewhat fatly in a cushioned wicker chair in a wide rowboat. She was middle-aged, sun-burned and dressed in a blue housewrap. The rowboat was tied to the bank at the drop of a few steps

leading to a walk which went through a garden to a house with summer balconies.

'*Bon jour*,' she said, friendly, noticing our interest.

'Biting well?' I asked.

'*Vous l'avez dit, monsieur!*'

'What kind of bait do you use?'

She held up the hook she was baiting. The little white maggot worm wiggled in a tiny arc in the air.

'*Américains, n'est-ce pas?*'

'*Oui.*'

'There's an extra pole in the boat. Tie up if you wish and try it.'

'*Merci beaucoup.*'

We laid back the paddles and sat at rest in the green deepness of the shade. Across the stream, the radio had begun again its modern wheezing, but on our side it was so still, a ripple glancing at the skiff could easily be heard.

My trouble was in baiting. I had no luck. The woman, beaming under her straw hat, and turning her sunburned face now and then toward me quizzically, puzzled her brows. Why didn't I pull in, helping her fill her pail?

'No wonder,' she said, finally, 'when you bait like that.'

She threaded a squirming white worm through the back of the neck. The point of the hook came out the other end, and there he hung, impaled skin deep, and wiggling for his life as he hit the dark water.

The afternoon droned on. The sleepiness of quiet rested on us like a spell. A huge plane soared suddenly overhead, power-purring its way to the south. It passed into silence. On the bend of the river we were buried in the shadows of the trees, far from any sense or feeling of war, of trenches, strain, bombs and mud and wounds. And, if one has never been in war . . . and war . . . world war. Bürgerkrieg. Civil War. Like that young Russian. . . .

'We did just as well not telling the Russian boy we were going to make a trip into Russia,' said my friend.

'Yes,' said I.

. . . And the Austrian I had met who had served on the front against the Italians. . . . One got different ideas of the war from the other side of the picture, travelling, for instance among the post-war Austrians, so like mild children, they were, who had lived too long, perhaps, under the wing of an emperor-father.

'I don't think I ever shot anybody. It wasn't any good, that war. I sort of shot over their heads.'

He was a Socialist. Every day, even ten years afterward when I saw him in his little house in Upper Austria, he had a kind of sickness in the morning.

'We could see it coming,' he told me. 'A dirty, greenish, yellow trail hugging the ground. I didn't get the mask out quick enough. And I sniffed a little of that gas.'

He excused himself and vomited. . . .

The fisherwoman had her pail full of fish.

She was interested in us being Americans, and had reason for her interest, as she proved. She rose, heavy in her loose blue dress, stretched and gathered up the pail and pole. Would we come up the walk to her house? she asked. She wanted us to see some pictures she had painted. We might know some big store in America that would handle them.

The woman had a racket.

She made delicate little copies, in coloured paints, of old prints, covered them with a trace of dust and then turned them over wholesale to a man in Paris who sold them piece by piece to bookshops, where delighted tourists stumbled upon them as genuine old paintings of a Paris which existed long before the Louvre was finished, a Paris of the time when the banks of the Seine were open to the sky, bordered by fields unhemmed in by modern apartments and high buildings covered with soot.

The backs of the pictures she pasted over with part of the pages of old French books. The effect was charming.

We looked about her home, filled with all the bric-à-brac of departed generations. Her father had been a wood-carver and a sculptor. A great, life-like boar's head thrust his fierce snout

at us from a wall. A buck's head with antlers looked down with death-glazed eyes from a place above the doorway.

'And here,' she pointed out, her eyes alight, 'as you have perhaps observed, I immortalized my passion. In all these little pictures, you will see, always, the little fisherman.'

We saw, in all the little pictures, the little fisherman, a miniature of life, not always carefully drawn but always present, patiently standing, or patiently sitting, a wand pole in his hand, and a blue river flowing by, containing the suggestion of schools of subtle, unhooked fish.

'If you hear of any firm in America. . . .'

We crossed the other bridge. The hot sun, which on the river had made me giddy those few instants in the canoe, was sinking over the trees beyond the railroad tracks. We found a table at the bathing pavilion near the water. The radio for the moment was silent.

In a roped-in place, sheltered from the main current, a few timid swimmers were splashing about, and from our table and our glasses we could watch them in the darkening water.

The twilight deepened and we sat without words.

Across the bend of the river, beyond where the quiet water of the swimming pool was, the main stream, steel in the pearl of twilight, cut swiftly past. A fish splashed once or twice, flapping the surface, and disappearing. The *château*, amid its trees, peered up stream toward us, into the light sweep of water. We sat a long time.

Once, I thought I saw the waiters, in their white coats, standing together in the garden, looking over at us.

The short Frenchman. He had had his bellyfull. *Les jeunes sont toujours patriotiques. . . .*

The boy was a White. Brought up in one way. Others in others. . . . We were lost, perhaps. All of us. In any case. But to be young and on the losing side, outside, cut off. But where was there peace nowadays? Even so.

Even the stillness in the air seemed oppressive. The accumulation of the day. Pregnant. Heavy, like close air to asthmatics. And Paris . . . with its blanket of sultriness. But would Germany, then, have vitality? Directed hope? Crossed words, tangles, all this forest we are in. Living together, foregoing more defining holds. Why? And just sitting. . . . Waiting? But sitting, untried, and. . . . I can no longer sit here. I cannot sit here any longer.

I can't sit here. I. . . .

I feel the cold water, shocked with the plunge. This is it! To begin! To swim. Out! Now. To cross. To DO this thing. To beat it. Hard! With fists. With me!

To SWIM!

My God!

I am in the middle of the river! My shoes are heavy with the water. My knee has a bullet ball in it. I cannot breathe. Steel waves of horses charge upon me. I am going under!

Whose eyes? These. Blue, curious, serious, hurt, puzzled? What youth? Where?

I am hauled out of the river. I am drowning! I am saved. . . .

All my muscles fag. I sit gazing into nothing, expectancy has gone. A tension is no more. . . . There was no storm, only something curious, a burst of sudden wind among loose papers on the ground, whirling, mad undercurrents in the air. . . .

The two white-coated figures in the darkness of the garden of the *château* moved.

'I think it would be better to eat in Paris to-night,' I suggested.

'The *château* is expensive,' said my friend.

'We don't want sociology on a day in the country,' I mumbled.

'What?' asked my friend, who had not quite heard.

We were paying the bill.

There was no way of saying, understandably, one is a little mad, beneath the weight of worlds.

As we walked over the bridge the soft waters of the Oise were lost below us in the still blackness.

At the *château*, the waiters were standing together in the light, looking out toward the roadway, their napkins on their arms, dully expecting diners yet to come. When they saw us pass, they bowed, slightly, in recognition. And a faint feeling of sickness tightened at my stomach.

Dorothy*

BY ERSKINE CALDWELL

(From *Scribner's Magazine*)

WHEN I saw her for the first time she was staring several hundred miles away. She was standing on the other side of the street near the corner holding a folded newspaper in front of her. It had been folded until the want ads. were the only print showing, and it looked like a paper printed without headlines. Suddenly she blinked her eyes several times and looked at the paper she was holding. Her knees and legs were rigidly stiff but her body swayed backward and forward like someone weak from hunger. Her shoulders dropped downward and downward until they seemed to be merely the upper part of her arms.

She glanced at the ads. every few moments and then searched half-heartedly for a number on one of the doors behind her. Once she opened her pocket-book and read something written on the back of an envelope. There were numbers on most of the doors, but either she could not see the numerals plainly enough or she could not find the one she was looking for — I didn't know what the trouble was. I couldn't see her face. Her head had dropped forward, and her chin sank to the collar of her waist. She would look up for a moment and then her head would suddenly drop downward again and hang there until she could raise it. She looked like a young mother weeping over the body of her child.

She was standing across the street within reach of one of the whiteway poles. She could have leaned against the pole or else found a place to sit down. I don't know why she did neither. I don't suppose she knew herself.

* From *American Earth*, by Erskine Caldwell. By permission of the publishers, Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons.

I was standing on the shady side of the street waiting for something. I didn't know what I was waiting for. It wasn't important, anyway. I didn't have anything to do, and I wasn't going anywhere. I was just standing there when I looked across the street and saw her with the folded paper in her hands. There were hundreds of other people in the street, all of them hurrying somewhere. She and I were the only ones standing still.

It was between one and two o'clock in the afternoon. Men and women were coming out of the restaurants on both sides of the street, hurrying back to work. I had a quarter in my pocket but I had not eaten any lunch. I was hungry but I was saving it. I wanted to get up to Richmond, where I was sure I could find a job. Things were quiet in New Orleans, and I had tried Atlanta. Now I wanted to get up to Richmond. It was July, and there were not many jobs anywhere. I had always been lucky in Richmond, though.

The girl on the other side of the street turned the paper over and read down another column of the close print. There were several office-buildings and a few banks on the street. Everywhere else were retail stores of some kind. Most of them had displays of women's wear in the windows. It was hard for a man to find a job, and not much easier for a woman. Especially a girl, unless she was wearing the right kind of clothes.

The girl put the newspaper under her arm and started across the street. I was standing a few steps from the corner. She came across, holding the paper tightly under her arm and looking down at the pavement all the time. When she reached the curb, she came down the street in my direction. She still did not look up. She held her head down all the time as if she were looking at her slippers.

The pavement was hot. It was July.

She walked past me, behind. I could hear the gritty sand and dust grind under her shoes. It made a sound like the sand-papering of an iron pipe. Then suddenly the sound stopped. I looked around and saw her standing almost beside me. She was so close I could have touched her with my hand. Her face

was pale and her lips were whiter than her forehead. When she looked up at me she did not raise her head, only her eyes saw me. Her eyes were damp. They were very blue. She did not want me to know that she had been crying.

I turned all the way around and looked at her. I did not know what to do. Until she spoke to me she held her mouth tight against her teeth, but she could not stop her lips from quivering.

'Can you tell me where No. 67 Forsythe Street is?' she asked me.

I looked down at her. Her hands were clinched so tightly I could see only the backs of her fingers. They were stained as if she had been handling freshly printed newspapers all day. They were not dirty. They were just not clean. A sort of blackish dust had settled on the backs of her hands. Dust is in the air of every city, and some people wash their hands five or six times a day to keep them clean. I don't know, but maybe she had not had a chance to wash her hands for several days. Her face was not soiled, but it looked as if she had tried to keep it clean with a dampened handkerchief and a powdered chamois skin.

She had asked me where No. 67 Forsythe Street was. She had said, 'Pardon me,' when she asked me. I knew she would say, 'Thank you very much,' when I told her where the address was.

I had to swallow hard before I could say anything at all. I knew where the number was. It was an employment agency. I had been there myself two or three times a day all that week. But there were no jobs there for anybody. It was July. I could look across the street and see the number in large gilt numerals on the door. The door was being constantly opened and closed by people going in and coming out again.

'What?' I asked her. It didn't sound like that, though, when I said it. When you talk to a girl who is very beautiful, you say things differently.

I knew what she said but I could not remember hearing her say it. I had been looking at her so long I forgot the question she asked.

She opened her pocket-book and put her hand inside, feeling for the envelope on which she had written the address. Her eyes were staring at me with the same far-away vagueness they had when I saw her for the first time on the other side of the street. She searched for the envelope without once looking at what she was doing. It had fallen to the pavement the moment she unclasped the pocket-book.

I picked up the letter. It was addressed to Dorothy — I couldn't read the last name. It had been sent in care of general delivery at the main post office from some little town down near the Florida border. It might have been from her mother or sister. It was a woman's handwriting. She jerked it from me before I could hand it to her. There was something in the way she reached for it that made me wonder about it. Maybe her father had died and she was trying to find a job so she could support her mother — I don't know. Things like that happen all the time. Or all of her family could have been killed in an accident and she had to leave home to make a living — things like that happen everywhere.

People were turning around to look at us. They walked past us and then turned around and stared. Peachtree Street was only around the corner from where we stood. It was a fashionable section.

I don't know what made me say what I did. I knew where No. 67 Forsythe Street was. I had been there myself only half an hour before. It was an employment agency. They said: 'Come in again to-morrow morning.' They told everybody the same thing — both men and women. It was the dull season. It was July.

I said, 'No. 67 is about three blocks down the street, on the other side of the viaduct.' I pointed down there, my arm over her head. She was very small beside me.

She looked down the street to the other side of the viaduct. There were half a dozen cheap hotels down there. They were the cheapest kind. Everybody has seen them. A lot of us know what they are like inside. There are some in every city. They

charge seventy-five cents and up. . . . I thought I was doing right. There was no money in her pocket-book. Not a cent. I saw everything she had in it. I had a quarter, and I would have to go all the way to Richmond before I found a job. There were no jobs across the street at No. 67. It was the dull season. Everybody was out of town for the summer. There were no jobs in July. And she was hungry. She had been trying to sleep in railroad-stations at night, too. . . . On the other side of the viaduct there were at least seven or eight hotels — the cheap kind. I had seen women in them, running down the corridors in kimonos after midnight. They always had some money, enough to buy something to eat when they were hungry. I know what it is to be hungry. A man can stand it for a while — a week, ten days, two weeks — but a woman — if you have ever seen the body of a starving woman you'll know why I thought I was doing right.

She had not moved.

'It's about three blocks down the street, on the other side of the viaduct,' I told her again. She knew what I said the first time.

She did not move.

She was standing there, looking at the dirty red brick buildings. She knew the kind they were. Some of them had signs that could be read across the viaduct. *Hotel* — 75c & \$1. She was reading the signs. My hand was in my pocket holding the quarter between the fingers. I don't know what she could have done with the money. I was ashamed to give it to her — it was only a quarter.

'All right,' she said.

It was as if she was making up her mind about something of great importance, like a decision of life and death. It was as if she had said, 'All right, I'll go.' She was not thanking me for telling her where she could find the number. She knew No. 67 was on this side of the viaduct.

'All right,' she said.

She turned and walked down the street toward the dirty red brick hotels. The heels of her slippers had worn sideways.

She tried to stand erectly on her feet and she had to walk stiffly so her ankles would not turn. If her legs had relaxed for a second she would have sprained her ankles.

She did not look back at me. Her blue flannel skirt was wrinkled far out of shape. It looked as if she had slept in it for several nights, maybe a week. It was covered with specks of dust and lint. Her white silk waist was creased and discoloured. The dust had lodged in the folds and the creases made horizontal smudges across her shoulders. Her hat looked as if it had been in a hard rain for several hours and then dried on a sharp peg of some kind. There was a peak in the crown that drew the whole hat out of shape.

I couldn't stand there any longer. She had gone almost a block toward the dirty red brick buildings. I crossed over and ran down an alley toward Alabama Street. At the end of the alley I found a drain sewer. I dropped the quarter in it. I didn't want the money in my pocket.

I went to a garage on Alabama Street. A mechanic had told me there was a good chance of getting a ride to Richmond if I would stay there long enough and wait until a car came along that was going through.

When I got to the garage, there was a car inside being greased. The man in the garage nodded at me and pointed toward the automobile. It was a big car. I knew it wouldn't take long to make the trip in a car like that. I asked the man who was driving it if he would take me to Richmond with him. He asked the man in the garage about me. They talked awhile in the office, and then he came out and said he would take me up with him. He was leaving right away.

We drove up to Richmond. I started out to find a job somewhere. There's a wholesale district under the elevated railway-tracks between the State Capitol and the river. I had been there before.

But there was something the matter with me. I didn't have the patience to look up a job. I was nervous. I had to keep moving all the time. I couldn't stand still.

A few days later I was in Baltimore. I applied for a job in an employment agency. They had plenty of jobs but they took their time about giving them out. They wanted you to wait a week or two to see if you would stick. Most everybody went on to Philadelphia. That's the way it is in summer. Everybody goes up. When the weather begins to get cold they come down again, stopping in Baltimore until the weather catches up, and then they move to the next city. Everybody ends up in New Orleans.

I couldn't stay. I couldn't stand still. I went on up to Philadelphia like everybody else. From Philadelphia you move up into Jersey. But I didn't. I stayed in Philadelphia.

Then one day I was standing on Market Street, near the city hall, watching a new skyscraper go up. I saw a woman on the other side of the street who looked like the girl I had seen in Atlanta. She was not the same one, of course. But there was a resemblance.

I could not think about anything else. I stood there all the afternoon thinking about the girl in Atlanta and wondering what I could do. I knew I had to figure out some way to get to Atlanta and find her. I had sent her down Forsythe Street, across the viaduct. She knew where she was going, but she would not have gone if it had not been for me. I sent her down there. . . . God, if I had only pointed across the street to No. 67! She knew where it was. She had been standing in front of it when I first saw her with the newspaper folded back at the want ads. But she knew it would have been useless to go inside. They would have told her to come in again the next morning. That's what they told everybody. Maybe she thought I would give her some money. I don't know what she thought, to tell the truth. But she was up against it, just as I was. She was too proud to ask for money to buy something to eat, and yet she thought I might give her some. I had a quarter, but I was ashamed to offer it to her after I sent her down the street toward those hotels. She had tried to find a job somewhere so she could have something to eat and a place to sleep. She knew there was always

one way. She knew about Forsythe Street on the other side of the viaduct. Somebody had told her about it. A woman in one of the railroad-stations, perhaps. Somebody told her, because she knew all about it.

I didn't send her there, she would have gone anyway. . . . That's what I think sometimes — but it's a lie! I told her to go down the street and cross the viaduct.

The Young Priest

BY MORLEY CALLAGHAN

(From *The New Yorker*)

FATHER VINCENT SULLIVAN was only one of three curates at the Cathedral, but he had been there long enough to understand that some men and women of the parish deserved to be cultivated more intimately than others. He had some social talent, too. At the seminary, four years ago, he had been lazy, good-natured, and very fond of telling long funny stories, and then laughing easily, showing his white teeth. He had full red lips and straight black hair. But as soon as he was ordained he became solemn, yet energetic. He never told stories. He tried to believe that he had some of the sanctity that a young priest ought to have. At his first mass, in the ordination sermon an old priest had shouted eloquently that a very young priest was greater and holier and more worthy of respect than anyone else on earth. Father Vincent Sullivan, hearing this, couldn't believe it entirely, but it gave him courage even if it did make him more solemn and serious.

But he still had his red lips and his black hair and his clear skin and a charming lazy drawling voice, which was very pleasant when he was actually trying to interest someone. Since he had so much zeal and could be so charming he was a good man to send calling upon the men and women of the parish, seeking donations for various parish activities. The really important people in the congregation like Mrs. Gibbons, whom he bowed to every Sunday after eleven o'clock mass, he hardly ever met socially; they were visited usually by the pastor, who sometimes even had a Sunday dinner with them or a game of cards in the evening.

Father Sullivan had a sincere admiration for Mrs. Gibbons. Her donations were frequent and generous. She went regularly

to communion, always made a novena to the little flower, St. Teresa. And sometimes in the summer evenings, when he was passing down the aisle from the vestry and it was almost dark in the Cathedral, he saw this good woman saying a few prayers before the altar of the Virgin. Of course he hardly glanced at her as he passed down the aisle, his face grave and expressionless, but he thought about her when he was at the door of the church and wished that she would stop and talk to him, if he stayed there, when she passed out. She was the kind of a woman, he thought, that all the priests of the parish ought to know more intimately. So he did happen to be near the door when she passed and bowed gravely, but she went by him and down to the street hardly more than nodding. She was a large, plump, well-kept woman walking erectly and slowly to the street. Her clothes were elegant. Her skin had been pink and fine. It was very satisfactory to think that such a well-groomed, dignified, and competent woman should appreciate the necessity of strict religious practice in her daily life. If he had been older and had wanted to speak to her he could readily have found some excuse, but he was young and fully aware of his own particular dignity. Honestly, he would rather have been the youngest priest at the Cathedral at this time than be a bishop or a cardinal. It was not only that he always remembered the words of the old priest who had preached his ordination sermon, but he realized that he sometimes trembled with delight at his constant opportunity to walk upon the altar, and when hearing confessions he was scrupulous, intensely interested, and never bored by even the most tiresome old woman with idiotic notions of small sins. It exulted him further, even if it also made him a little sad, to see that older priests were more mechanical about their duties, and when he once mentioned it to Father Jimmerson, the oldest priest at the Cathedral, the old man had smiled and sighed and said it was the inevitable lot of them all, and that the most beautiful days of his life had been when he was young, and had known the ecstasy of being hesitant, timid, and full of zeal. Of course, he added, older priests were just as confident in their faith, and

just as determined to be good, but they could not have the eagerness of the very young men.

One evening at about nine o'clock when Father Sullivan was sitting in the library reading a magazine, the housekeeper came into the room and said that someone, phoning from Mrs. Gibbons's house, wanted to speak to a priest.

'Was any priest in particular asked for?' Father Sullivan said.

'No. The woman — I don't know who she was — simply said she wanted to speak to a priest.'

'Then I'll speak to her, of course,' Father Sullivan said, putting aside his magazine and walking to the telephone. He was delighted at the opportunity of having a conversation with Mrs. Gibbons. He picked up the receiver and said 'Hello.'

A woman's voice, brusque, practical, said 'Who's that?'

'Father Sullivan,' he said encouragingly.

'Well, I'm Mrs. Gibbons's sister-in-law, and I'm at her house now. Things have come to a pretty pass around here. If you've got any influence, you ought to use it. Just at present Mrs. Gibbons is broken up thinking she's going to die and she's been howling for a priest. There's really nothing wrong with her, but if you've got any influence you ought to use it on her. She's a terrible woman. Come over and talk to her.'

'Are you sure?' he said a bit timidly.

'Sure of what?'

'Sure that you're not mistaken about Mrs. Gibbons.'

'Indeed, I'm not. Are you coming?'

'Oh yes, at once,' he said.

He put on his hat and mechanically looked at himself in the hall mirror. Then he glanced at his hands, which were perfectly manicured and clean. His collar was spotless. The blood showed through his clear skin and his lips were very red.

As he walked along the street he was a little nervous because the woman had sounded so abrupt, and he was wondering uneasily if Mrs. Gibbons really was a terrible woman. There had been some rumours of a certain laxity in her life since her husband

had either disappeared or deliberately gone away some time ago, but the parish pastor had shrugged his shoulders and spoken of scandal-mongers. Insinuations against the good name of Mrs. Gibbons, who, they knew, was one of the finest women of the parish, were in a measure an insinuation against the Church. Father Sullivan had decided some time ago that Mrs. Gibbons was really a splendid woman and a credit to any community.

It was a short walk from the Cathedral to Mrs. Gibbons's home, a big old house. A light was in the hall. A light was in the front room upstairs. Father Sullivan paused a moment at the street light, looking up at the house, and then walked quickly up to the door, feeling clean, aloof, dignified, and impressive, and at the same time vaguely eager.

He rang the bell. The door was opened wide by a woman, slim, brightly-dressed, and with her hair dyed red, who stepped back and looked at him critically.

'I'm Father Sullivan,' he said apologetically but seriously.

'Oh, yes, I see.'

'I believe Mrs. Gibbons wanted to see me.'

'Well, I don't know whether she knows you or not,' the woman added a bit doubtfully. 'I'm her sister-in-law. I'm the one that phoned you.'

'I'll see her,' he said with a kind of grave finality as he stepped into the house. He felt cool, dignified, and important.

'I mean that I was going to talk to you first,' the red-headed woman said. 'She's a tartar, you know — only it just happens that she feels broken up now about something, and it's time for someone to give her a talking to.'

'I'll talk to her,' he said. Really he didn't know what he was expected to say.

The slim woman walked ahead upstairs and Father Sullivan followed. The door of the front room was open and the slim woman stood looking into the room. The light shone on her red hair. Father Sullivan was close behind and followed her into the room. Mrs. Gibbons was lying on a divan, a brown kimono thrown loosely around her. One of her plump arms was revealed

as she held her head up, resting on her elbow. Her plump body was hardly concealed under the kimono. She looked depressed and unhappy as though she had been crying. When she saw Father Sullivan she didn't even open her mouth, just shrugged her shoulders and held the same dejected expression. The red-headed slim woman stared at her alertly and then glanced at Father Sullivan, who was bending forward trying to attract Mrs. Gibbons's attention while he got ready to speak in his slow, drawling, and pleasing voice. But then he noticed a beer-bottle on the table close to the divan. Mrs. Gibbons was now looking at him cautiously, and then she smiled slowly. 'Can't ask you to have a drink, Father,' she said. She was obviously thinking what a nice young fellow he was. Then she started to laugh a little, her whole body shaking.

'I thought you wanted to talk to him, Jessie,' the other woman said.

'Oh, I don't think I do.'

'But you said you wanted to.'

'Oh, Father won't mind, will you, Father?'

'Go on, talk to her, Father,' the red-headed woman said impatiently. 'I've had a row with her and I've been trying to tell her what a trollop she is. She's low, if anyone ever was. Now tell it to her.'

If Mrs. Gibbons had started talking to him Father Sullivan might not have been embarrassed, but as he looked at her, waiting, and saw her stretched out so sloppily and noticed again the beer-bottle on the table, he felt he was going to hear something that would disgrace her and the parish for ever. She kept on looking at him, her under-lip hanging a little, her eyes old and wise. The red-headed woman was standing there, one hand on her hip, her mouth drooping cynically at the corners. They were both waiting for him to say something. In the darkness of the confessional it would have been different, but now Father Sullivan felt his face flushing, for he couldn't help thinking of Mrs. Gibbons as one of the finest women of the parish, and there she was stretched out like a loose old woman. He tried

to hold his full, red, lower lip with his white teeth. He felt humiliated and ashamed, and they were both watching him. His nervous embarrassment began to hurt and bewilder him.

'If I can be of any assistance —' he muttered, feeling almost ready to cry.

They didn't speak to him, just kept on looking at him steadily, and he had a sudden nervous feeling that the red-headed woman might go out and leave him alone with Mrs. Gibbons.

Some words did actually come into his head, but Mrs. Gibbons, sitting up suddenly, stared at him and said flatly: 'Oh, he's too young. How do you expect me to talk to him?' Then she lay down again and looked away into the corner of the room.

The sister-in-law took hold of Father Sullivan firmly by the arm and led him out to the hall. 'She's right about that,' she said. 'I thought so from the start.'

'There are some things that are hard to talk about, I know,' he said, flustered and ashamed. 'If in her life . . . I mean I have the greatest faith in Mrs. Gibbons,' he said desperately. 'Please let me go back and talk to her.'

'No. I sized up the situation, and know that once she got talking to you she'd pull the wool over your eyes.'

'I was just about to say to her —' Father Sullivan said, following her downstairs, and still trembling a little. 'I know she's a good woman.'

'No, you're too young for such a job. And she hasn't the morals of a tomcat.'

'I ought to be able to do something.'

'Oh no, never mind, thanks. She's got over the notion she's going to die. I could tell that when she shrugged her shoulders.'

'But please explain what she wanted to say to me,' he said. 'I respect Mrs. Gibbons,' he added helplessly.

'It's no use — you're too young a man,' the woman said abruptly. 'You wouldn't be able to do anything with her anyway.'

'I'm sorry,' he said. 'I'm awfully sorry,' he kept on saying. She had hold of his arm and was actually opening the front door. 'Thanks for coming, anyway,' she said. 'We've been rowing all

afternoon and I told her plenty, and I wanted someone else to take a hand in it.'

'I'm very sorry,' he said. 'Was she feeling badly?'

'Pretty badly. I came around here, as I do about once a month to give her a piece of my mind, but she was all broken up. Something got into her.'

'Something must have happened, because she's a fine woman. I know that.'

'You do, eh? Her daughter Margaret has gone away with her young man Peter. They must have had an awful row here late last night.'

'I didn't know the daughter very well,' the priest said.

'No? Well, it looked to me as if old Jess wanted to know Peter too well. That was the trouble. When I came around here she was lying down half dressed looking at herself in a hand mirror. What's the matter with her? She's got to grow old some time. Thanks, though, for coming. Good night.'

'Good night. I'm sorry I couldn't help her.'

As he walked down the street he had a feeling that the woman might take him by the arm and lead him down to the corner.

It was a mild warm night. He was walking very slowly. The Cathedral spire stuck up in the night sky above all the houses in the block. He was still breathing irregularly and feeling that he had been close to something immensely ugly and evil that had nearly overwhelmed him. He shook his head a little because he still wanted to go on thinking that Mrs. Gibbons was one of the finest women in the parish, for his notion of what was good in the life of the parish seemed to depend upon such a belief. And as he walked slowly he felt, with a kind of desperate clarity, that really he had been always unimportant in the life around the Cathedral. He was still ashamed and had no joy at all now in being a young priest.

Water Never Hurt a Man

BY WALTER D. EDMONDS

(From *Harper's Magazine*)

HE trudged with his hands tight, fists in his pockets, his head bowed to the wind and rain. Ahead of him in the darkness, so that he could hear the sudge of their hoofs, the towing team bowed their necks against the collars. He could not see them in the darkness. When he lifted his face the rain cut at his eyes; and when lightning split the darkness he shut his eyes tight and pulled his head closer into his coat collar, waiting blindly for the thunder. Once in a lull he looked back. He could barely make out the bow lantern and the arrows of grey rain slanting against it. Between him and the light he caught glimpses of the tow rope, dipped slightly between the team's heaves, and the roughened water in the canal. Somewhere back of the light his father stood by the rudder-sweep, his beard curled and wet, his eyes slits, sighting for the bank. John wanted to go back, wanted to tie-by for the night, wanted to be in the bunk with his head buried in the friendly, musty smell of the blanket, where the storm could not reach him. He had gone back once, but his father had reached for his belt, saying, 'Go on back. Water never hurt a man. It keeps his hide from cracking.'

John had gone back to the team. They did not need his guidance. But it was his place to keep the rope from fouling if a packet boat coming their way signalled to pass. He was afraid of his father at night, afraid of the big belt and strong hands with hair on the fingers over the knuckles. He caught up with the plodding horses and let the rain have its way. At each stroke of lightning his small back stiffened. It was his first year on the canal and he was afraid of storms at night.

He had been proud that spring when his father said, 'John's old enough to be a driver boy, he's coming along with me and

the *Bacconola*.' He had showed his dollar to his brothers and sisters, first pay in advance, and his father had bought him a pair of cow-hide boots from the cobbler when he came to the village. Later, when the frost was out of the mud, John would go barefoot.

He was proud of his father. In Westernville, with other small boys, he had heard the dock loafers talking about his father, George Brace, bully of the Black River Canal. In some strange way they had news of every fight his father fought a day after it happened. 'George licked the Amsterdam Bully Wednesday mornin'. Lock fifty-nine. It tuk nineteen minits only.' 'George is a great hand. Them big ditch bezabors is learning about George.' A stranger had said, 'Wait till Buffalo Joe meets up with him.' There was silence then. Buffalo Joe Buller, he was bully of the western end of the Erie. A pea-souper, a Canadian, he fought the Erie bullies down one by one, and when he licked them he marked them with his boot in the Canadian style. It had a cross of nails to mark the beaten man's face. 'You wait,' said the stranger.

Little John, listening then, felt shivers down his back. But now, with the wind and rain, and the lightning tumbling the clouds apart, he forgot. They were on the long haul westward, to Buffalo, with ploughs aboard, full drafted in Rome. They had had to leave three hundredweight on the dock.

He felt his muddy boots slip in the towpath. He heard the squelching of the horses. Squelch-squelch, a steady rhythm as they kept step. Once the lightning caught his eyes; and he had a clear view of trees beyond the canal-side meadow, their budded twigs bent down, like old women with their backs to the storm, and the flat, sharp wall of a canal house, sixty yards behind him. He had not even seen it as he passed. The rain was finding a channel down his neck. It crept farther, bit by bit, with a cold touch. He could feel his fists white in his pockets from clenching them. His legs ached with the slippery going. They had had supper at six, tied up by the bank, and John had eaten his plate of beans. He had felt sleepy afterward, barely

noticing his father's big body bent over the dishpan. It was warm in the cabin, with the little stove roaring red hot, and his small hat hanging beside his father's cap on the door.

He had been almost asleep when his father's hand shook him roughly, then tumbled him from his chair. 'Get out, John. Them ploughs we've got has to get west for spring ploughing. We'll pick up Bob in Syracuse, then we'll have a better chance to rest. Get out now,' and he had reached for his belt.

What did John care for the old ploughs anyway? But it hadn't then begun to storm, and he had gone with a tired sense of importance. One had to keep freight moving on the old Erie. The old *Bacconola* always made fast hauls. He had been proud and shouted in a high voice to the tired horses and kicked one with his new boots.

But now he did not care about the ploughs. He wished the crazy old *Bacconola* would spring a leak in her flatbottom, so they would have to stop till the hurry-up boat came along and patched her up. He thought of her now, bitterly, with her scabs of orange paint. 'Crummy old blister,' he called her to himself, and made names to himself, which he said aloud to the horses in a shrill voice. He was only twelve, with all the bitterness of twelve, and the world was a hateful thing.

'God damned old crummy bitch of a tub. . . .' But the lightning caught him, and his throat tightened and he wanted to cry out under the thunder.

A water rat went off the towpath with a splash, and a frog squeaked.

He glanced up to see a team on the opposite towpath heading east. 'Hey, there!' yelled the driver in a hoarse voice; but John was too tired to answer. He liked to yell back in the daytime and crack his whip. But he had dropped his whip a while back. He would get a licking for that in the morning. But he didn't care. To hell with the whip and the driver and Pa.

'Hey, there!' shouted the other driver, a voice in the rain. 'All right, all right, you dirty pup. Eat rain, if you want to and go drowned.' The rain took the voice, and the boat came by,

silently, noiseless as oil, with its bow light a yellow touch against the rain. The steersman gave a toot upon the horn, but the sound bubbled through the water in it, and the steersman swore.

They were still on the long level, alone once more. It must be midnight. If only the lock would show. In Syracuse Bob would come. He took turns driving and steering and cooking — a little man with a bent shoulder who had dizzy spells once in a while.

At the lock John could sit down and rest and listen to the tender snarling at his sluices while the boat went down, and heaving at his gate beam, while John's father heaved against the other. He was crazy, the lock-keeper was; all lock-keepers were crazy. John's father always said so. John had seen a lot of them in their week of hauling, but he did not see why they were crazy. They looked no different even if they were. He hoped the lock-keeper would be asleep, so it would take a while to wake him.

Squelch, squelch-squelch, squelch. The horses kept plodding. Suddenly John caught a break in the rhythm. One foot sounded light. He pushed his way up beside them against the wind and laid a wet hand against a side. He could not see, but the side felt hot and wet, and he got a smell of sweat. Yes, he could feel the off horse was limping. Hope filled him. He waited till the boat came up where he was, a small figure, shrunk with cold. The boat's bow, round and sullen, slipped along, the bow light hanging over and showing an old mullein stalk in silhouette against the water.

'Pa!

His voice was thin against the wind.

He saw his father's figure, rain dripping from the visor of his cap, straight and big, almighty almost, breast to the wind.

'Pa!

The head turned.

'Hey, there! What you doin'? Get on back! Or I'll soap you proper.'

'Pa! Prince has got a limp in his front foot. Pa!

The voice turned hoarse with passion, 'Get on back, you little

pup. Fifty-nine's just round the bend next. Take your whip and tar him. Or I'll tar you proper.'

John sobbed aloud. For a bare moment he thought of staying still and letting the boat pass on. He would run away and join the railroad. He would get run over by an engine there, just when things went well, and they would be sorry. He started to draw himself a picture of his body coming home in a black box, and his mother crying, and his father looking ashamed and sorry, and then the lightning made a blue flare and he saw the straight figure of his father ahead, on the *Bacconola*, which seemed struck still, a pill-box in the flat country, and he was afraid and went running desperately, hoping he could get back to the team before he was missed.

He caught the horses on the bend and, lifting his face to the storm, saw the lock lanterns dimly ahead. And even then his ears caught, coming up behind him, the harsh blast of a tin horn.

He looked back and saw a light, two rope lengths behind the *Bacconola*. Even while he watched over his shoulder, he saw that it was creeping up.

'John!' His father's voice beat down the sound of rain. 'Lay into them brutes and beat into the lock!'

He could imagine his father glaring back. If only he had not dropped his whip. He would have liked to ask his father for the big bull whip that cracked like forty guns, but he knew what would happen if he did. He shrieked at the horses and fumbled for a stone to throw. But they had heard and recognized the note in his father's voice, and they were bending earnestly against the collars. A sudden excitement filled John as his father's horn rang out for the lock. The wind took the sound and carried it back, and the other boat's horn sounded a double toot for passing. John yelled shrilly. The horses seemed to stand still, and there was an odd effect in the rain of the canal sliding under them inch by inch laboriously, as if with his own feet he turned the world backward.

Minutes crept at them out of the rain, and the lights of the lock did not seem to stir. Then John heard the squelching

of the team behind his back. Little by little they were coming up, past the *Bacconola*, until he could hear them panting through the rain, and saw them close behind, behind dim puffs of steamy breath. He watched them frantically. Then the lightning came once more, a triple bolt, and the thunder shook him, and when he opened his eyes once more, he saw the lock lanterns a hundred yards ahead.

At that instant the driver of the boat behind yelled, 'Haw!' and the following team swung across his towrope, and they were snarled.

The horses stopped of themselves, shuddering. They were old hands, and knew enough not to move, for fear of being thrown from the towpath. The boats came drifting on, placidly as water-logged sticks. The light of the following boat showed a dark bow coming up. John heard his father roaring oaths, and saw by the bow light of the other boat, a tall, clean-shaven man as big as his father crouched to jump ashore. Then both boats came in by the towpath, and both men jumped. They made no sound except for the thump of their shoes, but John saw them dim against the lantern light, their fists coming at each other in slow heavy swings.

The strange team was panting close beside him, and he did not hear the blows landing. There was a pushing upward in his chest, which hurt, and his fists made small balls in the pockets of his trousers. The other boater and his father were standing breast to breast, their faces still, cut, stonelike things in the yellow light, and the rain walling them in. He saw his father lift his hand, and the other man slip, and he would have yelled, for all his cold, if the lightning had not come again, so blue that his eyes smarted. He doubled up, hiding his face, and wept. . . .

A hand caught him by the shoulder.

'A little puny girly boy,' said a voice. 'I wouldn't lick you proper! Not a little girly baby like you. But I'll spank you just to learn you to let us come by!'

John opened his eyes to see a boy, about his own height but broader built, squinting at him through the rain.

'Take off your pants, dearie,' said the boy in a mock voice, digging in his fingers till John winced. 'Joe Buller can handle your Captain smart enough. Me, I'll just paddle you to learn you.'

John, looking up, was afraid. He did not know what to do, but without warning his hands acted for him, and he struck at the square face with all his might. A pain shot up his arm, making his elbow tingle, and the boy fell back. John could feel the surprise in that body stock still in the rain, and had an instant of astonished pride.

Then panic laid hold of him and he tried to run. But the other boy jumped on his back. They went down flat in the mud, the older boy on John's shoulders, pommelling him till his head sang, and forcing his face into the track, and crying, 'Eat it, you lousy little skunk. Eat it, eat it, eat it, eat it.'

John could taste the mud in his mouth, with a salty taste, and he began to squirm, twisting his head to escape the brown suffocation. He heaved himself behind, throwing the boy unexpectedly forward, twisted round, and kicked with all his might. The boy yelled and jumped back on him. And again they went down, this time the boy bent seriously to business. And this time John realized how it was to be hurt. At the third blow something burst loose in his inside and he screamed. He was crying madly. The other boy was heavier, but John squirmed over on his back, and as the brown hand came down on his face he caught it in both his own and bit with all the strength of his jaws. The hand had a slippery, muddy taste, but in a second it was warm in his mouth, and there was a sick, salt warmth on his tongue. The boy struck him once in the eyes and once on the nose, but John held on and bit. Then the boy howled and tore loose and ran back. There was another stroke of lightning, and John saw him doubled up, holding his hand to his mouth; and he got stiffly up, turned his back to the thunder and saw his father bent over the other boater, taking off his shoe.

John walked up to them. His father's face was bleeding a trickle of blood from the right eye into his beard, but he was grinning.

'I'll take his boot for a souvenir,' he said. 'How'd you come out, Johnny?'

'Oh, pretty good. I guess that other feller won't bother us no more,' said John, examining the fallen man. He lay half stunned, by the water's edge, a smooth, big man, with frightened, pale eyes. And one crumpled arm was in the water. John's father looked at the man and then at the boot he had in his hand.

'I'd ought to mark him by the rights of it; but he ain't worth the work, the way he laid down. Who'd ever know his name was Buller?'

Buller. . . . John gazed up admiringly at his big father and studied how the blood ran from the outer corner of the eye and lost its way in the black beard, which the rain had curled. His father had licked the Western bully proper.

'Hey, there!'

The hail came in a thin, cracking voice. Turning, they saw the lock-keeper, white-bearded, peering at them from under the battered umbrella he held with both hands against the wind. The tails of his nightshirt whipped round the tops of his boots.

'Hey, there, you. There'll be some down boats by pretty quick, so you want to hurry along now, while the level's right.'

John was aware of his father standing looking down at him.

'Shall we tie-by where we be?' asked his father.

John felt pains coming into the back of his neck where he had been pommelled, and his knuckles ached.

'We can stay here a spell,' said his father. 'The storm's comin' on again. There'll be bad lightnin', I make no doubt.'

As he spoke there came a flash, and John whirled to see if the other driver boy was still visible. He was proud to see him sitting by the towpath, nursing his hurt hand. John did not notice the thunder. He was elaborating a sentence in his mind.

He made a hole in the mud with the toe of his boot, spat into it, and covered it, the way he had seen his father do at home on a Sunday.

'Why,' he said, in his high voice, eyeing the old *Bacconola*,

'I guess them poor bezabor farmers will be wantin' them ploughs for the spring ploughing, I guess.'

'Me, I'm kind of tuckered,' said his father, raising his shoulders to loose the wet shirt off his back. 'And the rain's commencing too.'

John said importantly, 'Watter never hurt a man, it keeps his hide from cracking.'

His father jumped aboard. He took his horn and tooted it for the lock. John ran ahead and put back the other boat's team and cried to their own horses to go on. They took up the slack wearily, and presently little ripples showed on the *Bacconola's* bow, and the lantern showed the shore slipping back. On the stern, George Brace blew a blast for the lock. The old lock-keeper was standing by the sluices, drops of water from his beard falling between his feet.

The boat went down, and the horses took it out. Ahead, the team and the boy left the lantern light and entered once more the darkness. The rope followed. And once more the *Bacconola* was alone with its own lantern.

Presently, though, in a stroke of light, George saw his son beside the boat.

'What's the matter? Hey, there!' he asked.

'Say, Pa! Will you chuck me your bull whip here ashore? Them horses is getting kind of dozey. They need soaping proper.'

'Where's your whip?'

'I guess I left it a while back. I guess it was in that kind of scrummage we had. I guess it needs a heavier whip anyhow. I guess a man couldn't spare the time going back for it.'

'Sure,' said George.

He reached down and took it from its peg, recoiled it, and tossed it ashore. The boat went ahead, slowly, with a sound of water, and of rain falling, and of wind.

That Evening Sun Go Down

BY WILLIAM FAULKNER

(From *The American Mercury*)

I

MONDAY is no different from any other weekday in Jefferson now. The streets are paved now, and the telephone and the electric companies are cutting down more and more of the shade trees — the water oaks, the maples and locusts and elms — to make room for iron poles bearing clusters of bloated and ghostly and bloodless grapes, and we have a city laundry which makes the rounds on Monday morning, gathering the bundles of clothes into bright-coloured, specially-made motor cars: the soiled wearing of a whole week now flees apparition-like behind alert and irritable electric horns, with a long diminishing noise of rubber and asphalt like a tearing of silk, and even the negro women who still take in white people's washing after the old custom, fetch and deliver it in automobiles.

But fifteen years ago, on Monday morning the quiet, dusty, shady streets would be full of negro women with, balanced on their sturdy turbaned heads, bundles of clothes tied up in sheets, almost as large as cotton bales, carried so without touch of hand between the kitchen door of the white house and the blackened wash-pot beside a cabin door in Negro Hollow.

Nancy would set her bundle on the top of her head, then upon the bundle in turn she would set the black straw sailor hat which she wore winter and summer. She was tall, with a high, sad face sunken a little where her teeth were missing. Sometimes we would go a part of the way down the lane and across the pasture with her, to watch the balanced bundle and the hat that never bobbed nor wavered, even when she walked down into the ditch and climbed out again and stooped through the fence. She would go down on her hands and knees and crawl

through the gap, her head rigid, up-tilted, the bundle steady as a rock or a balloon, and rise to her feet and go on.

Sometimes the husbands of the washing women would fetch and deliver the clothes, but Jubah never did that for Nancy, even before her father told him to stay away from her house, even when Dilsey was sick and Nancy would come to cook for us.

And then about half the time we'd have to go down the lane to Nancy's house and tell her to come on and get breakfast. We would stop at the ditch, because father told us to not have anything to do with Jubah — he was a short black man, with a razor scar down his face — and we would throw stones at Nancy's house until she came to the door, leaning her head around it without any clothes on.

'What yawl mean, chunking my house?' Nancy said. 'What you little devils mean?'

'Father says for you to come and get breakfast,' Caddy said. 'Father says it's over half an hour now, and you've got to come this minute.'

'I ain't studying no breakfast,' Nancy said. 'I going to get my sleep out.'

'I bet you're drunk,' Jason said. 'Father says you're drunk. Are you drunk, Nancy?'

'Who says I is?' Nancy said. 'I got to get my sleep out. I ain't studying no breakfast.'

So after a while we quit chunking the house and went back home. When she finally came, it was too late for me to go to school. So we thought it was whisky until that day when they arrested her again and they were taking her to jail and they passed Mr. Stovall. He was the cashier in the bank and a deacon in the Baptist church and Nancy began to say:

'When you going to pay me, white man? When you going to pay me, white man? It's been three times now since you paid me a cent —' Mr. Stovall knocked her down, but she kept on saying, 'When you going to pay me, white man? It's been three times now since ——' until Mr. Stovall kicked her in the mouth, with his heel and the marshal caught Mr. Stovall back, and Nancy

lying in the street, laughing. She turned her head and spat out some blood and teeth and said, 'It's been three times now since he paid me a cent.'

That was how she lost her teeth, and all that day they told about Nancy and Mr. Stovall, and all that night the ones that passed the jail could hear Nancy singing and yelling. They could see her hands holding to the window bars, and a lot of them stopped along the fence, listening to her and to the jailer trying to make her shut up. She didn't shut up until just before daylight, when the jailer began to hear a bumping and scraping upstairs and he went up there and found Nancy hanging from the window bar. He said that it was cocaine and not whisky, because no nigger would try to commit suicide unless he was full of cocaine, because a nigger full of cocaine was not a nigger any longer.

The jailer cut her down and revived her; then he beat her, whipped her. She had hung herself with her dress. She had fixed it all right, but when they arrested her she didn't have on anything except a dress and so she didn't have anything to tie her hands with and she couldn't make her hands let go of the window ledge. So the jailer heard the noise and ran up there and found Nancy hanging from the window, stark naked.

When Dilsey was sick in her cabin and Nancy was cooking for us, we could see her apron swelling out; that was before father told Jubah to stay away from the house. Jubah was in the kitchen, sitting behind the stove, with his razor scar on his black face like a piece of dirty string. He said it was a water-melon that Nancy had under her dress. And it was winter, too.

'Where did you get a water-melon in the winter?' Caddy said.

'I didn't,' Jubah said. 'It wasn't me that give it to her. But I can cut it down, same as if it was.'

'What makes you want to talk that way before these chillen?' Nancy said. 'Whyn't you go on to work? You done et. You want Mr. Jason to catch you hanging around his kitchen, talking that way before these chillen?'

'Talking what way, Nancy?' Caddy said.

'I can't hang around white man's kitchen,' Jubah said. 'But white man can hang around mine. White man can come in my house, but I can't stop him. When white man want to come in my house, I ain't got no house. I can't stop him, but he can't kick me outen it. He can't do that.'

Dilsey was still sick in her cabin. Father told Jubah to stay off our place. Dilsey was still sick. It was a long time. We were in the library after supper.

'Isn't Nancy through yet?' mother said. 'It seems to me that she has had plenty of time to have finished the dishes.'

'Let Quentin go and see,' father said. 'Go and see if Nancy is through, Quentin. Tell her she can go on home.'

I went to the kitchen. Nancy was through. The dishes were put away and the fire was out. Nancy was sitting in a chair, close to the cold stove. She looked at me.

'Mother wants to know if you are through,' I said.

'Yes,' Nancy said. She looked at me. 'I done finished.' She looked at me.

'What is it?' I said. 'What is it?'

'I ain't nothing but a nigger,' Nancy said. 'It ain't none of my fault.'

She looked at me, sitting in the chair before the cold stove, the sailor hat on her head. I went back to the library. It was the cold stove and all, when you think of a kitchen being warm and busy and cheerful. And with a cold stove and the dishes all put away, and nobody wanting to eat at that hour.

'Is she through?' mother said.

'Yessum,' I said.

'What is she doing?' mother said.

'She's not doing anything. She's through.'

'I'll go and see,' father said.

'Maybe she's waiting for Jubah to come and take her home,' Caddy said.

'Jubah is gone,' I said. Nancy told us how one morning she woke up and Jubah was gone.

'He quit me,' Nancy said. 'Done gone to Memphis, I reckon. Dodging them city po-lice for a while, I reckon.'

'And a good riddance,' father said. 'I hope he stays there.'

'Nancy's scaired of the dark,' Jason said.

'So are you,' Caddy said.

'I'm not,' Jason said.

'Scairy cat,' Caddy cried.

'I'm not,' Jason said.

'You, Candace!' mother said.

Father came back. 'I am going to walk down the lane with Nancy,' he said. 'She says Jubah is back.'

'Has she seen him?' mother said.

'No. Some negro sent her word that he was back in town. I won't be long.'

'You'll leave me alone, to take Nancy home?' mother said. 'Is her safety more precious to you than mine?'

'I won't be long,' father said.

'You'll leave these children unprotected, with that negro about?'

'I'm going too,' Caddy said. 'Let me go, father.'

'What would he do with them, if he were unfortunate enough to have them?' father said.

'I want to go, too,' Jason said.

'Jason!' mother said. She was speaking to father. You could tell that by the way she said it. Like she believed that all day father had been trying to think of doing the thing that she wouldn't like the most, and that she knew all the time that after a while he would think of it. I stayed quiet, because father and I both knew that mother would want him to make me stay with her, if she just thought of it in time. So father didn't look at me. I was the oldest. I was nine and Caddy was seven and Jason was five.

'Nonsense,' father said. 'We won't be long.'

Nancy had her hat on. We came to the lane. 'Jubah always been good to me,' Nancy said. 'Whenever he had two dollars, one of them was mine.' We walked in the lane. 'If I can just get through the lane,' Nancy said, 'I be all right then.'

The lane was always dark. 'This is where Jason got scared on Hallowe'en,' Caddy said.

'I didn't,' Jason said.

'Can't Aunt Rachel do anything with him?' father said. Aunt Rachel was old. She lived in a cabin beyond Nancy's, by herself. She had white hair and she smoked a pipe in the door, all day long; she didn't work any more. They said she was Jubah's mother. Sometimes she said she was, and sometimes she said she wasn't any kin to Jubah.

'Yes you did,' Caddy said. 'You were scairder than Frony. You were scairder than T.P. even. Scairder than niggers.'

'Can't nobody do nothing with him,' Nancy said. 'He say I done woke up the devil in him, and ain't but one thing going to lay it again.'

'Well, he's gone now,' father said. 'There's nothing for you to be afraid of now. And if you'd just let white men alone.'

'Let what white men alone?' Caddy said. 'How let them alone?'

'He ain't gone nowhere,' Nancy said. 'I can feel him. I can feel him now, in this lane. He hearing us talk, every word, hid somewhere, waiting. I ain't seen him, and I ain't going to see him again but once more, with that razor. That razor on that string down his back, inside his shirt. And then I ain't going to be even surprised.'

'I wasn't scared,' Jason said.

'If you'd behave yourself, you'd have kept out of this,' father said. 'But it's all right now. He's probably in St. Louis now. Probably got another wife by now and forgot all about you.'

'If he has, I better not find out about it,' Nancy said. 'I'd stand there and every time he wropped her, I'd cut that arm off. I'd cut his head off and I'd slit her belly and I'd shove——'

'Hush,' father said.

'Slit whose belly, Nancy?' Caddy said.

'I wasn't scared,' Jason said. 'I'd walk right down this lane by myself.'

'Yah,' Caddy said. 'You wouldn't dare to put your foot in it if we were not with you.'

II

Dilsey was still sick, and so we took Nancy home every night until mother said, 'How much longer is this going to go on? I to be left alone in this big house while you take home a frightened negro?'

We fixed a pallet in the kitchen for Nancy. One night we waked up, hearing the sound. It was not singing and it was not crying, coming up the dark stairs. There was a light in mother's room and we heard father going down the hall, down the back stairs, and Caddy and I went into the hall. The floor was cold. Our toes curled away from the floor while we listened to the sound. It was like singing, and it wasn't like singing, like the sounds that negroes make.

Then it stopped and we heard father going down the back stairs, and we went to the head of the stairs. Then the sound began again, in the stairway, not loud, and we could see Nancy's eyes half-way up the stairs, against the wall. They looked like cats' eyes do, like a big cat against the wall, watching us. When we came down the steps to where she was she quit making the sound again, and we stood there until father came back up from the kitchen, with his pistol in his hand. He went back down with Nancy and they came back with Nancy's pallet.

We spread the pallet in our room. After the light in mother's room went off, we could see Nancy's eyes again. 'Nancy,' Caddy whispered, 'are you asleep, Nancy?'

Nancy whispered something. It was 'oh' or 'no,' I don't know which. Like nobody had made it, like it came from nowhere and went nowhere, until it was like Nancy was not there at all; that I had looked so hard at her eyes on the stair that they had got printed on my eyelids, like the sun does when you have closed your eyes and there is no sun. 'Jesus,' Nancy whispered. 'Jesus.'

'Was it Jubah?' Caddy whispered. 'Did he try to come into the kitchen?'

'Jesus,' Nancy said. Like this: Jeeeeeeeeeeeeesus, until the sound went out like a match or a candle does.

'Can you see us, Nancy?' Caddy whispered, 'Can you see our eyes too?'

'I ain't nothing but a nigger,' Nancy said. 'God knows. God knows.'

'What did you see down there in the kitchen?' Caddy whispered. 'What tried to get in?'

'God knows,' Nancy said. We could see her eyes. 'God knows.'

Dilsey got well. She cooked dinner. 'You'd better stay in bed a day or two longer,' father said.

'What for?' Dilsey said. 'If I had been a day later, this place would be to rack and ruin. Get on out of here, now, and let me get my kitchen straight again.'

Dilsey cooked supper, too. And that night, just before dark, Nancy came into the kitchen.

'How do you know he's back?' Dilsey said. 'You ain't seen him.'

'Jubah is a nigger,' Jason said.

'I can feel him,' Nancy said. 'I can feel him laying yonder in the ditch.'

'To-night?' Dilsey said. 'Is he there to-night?'

'Dilsey's a nigger too,' Jason said.

'You try to eat something,' Dilsey said.

'I don't want nothing,' said Nancy.

'I ain't a nigger,' Jason said.

'Drink some coffee,' Dilsey said. She poured a cup of coffee for Nancy. 'Do you know he's out there to-night? How come you know it's to-night?'

'I know,' Nancy said. 'He's there, waiting. I know. I done lived with him too long. I know what he fixing to do 'fore he knows it himself.'

'Drink some coffee,' Dilsey said. Nancy held the cup to her mouth and blew into the cup. Her mouth pursed out like a spreading adder's, like a rubber mouth, like she had blown all the colour out of her lips with blowing the coffee.

'I ain't a nigger,' Jason said. 'Are you a nigger, Nancy?'

'I hell-born, child,' Nancy said. 'I won't be nothing soon. I going back where I come from soon.'

III

She began to drink the coffee. While she was drinking, holding the cup in both hands, she began to make the sound again. She made the sound into her cup and the coffee splashed out on to her hands and her dress. Her eyes looked at us and she sat there, her elbows on her knees, holding the cup in both hands, looking at us across the wet cup, making the sound.

'Look at Nancy,' Jason said. 'Nancy can't cook for us now. Dilsey's got well now.'

'You hush up,' Dilsey said. Nancy held the cup in both hands, looking at us, making the sound, like there were two of them: one looking at us and the other making the sound. 'Whyn't you let Mr. Jason telefoam the marshal?' Dilsey said. Nancy stopped then, holding the cup in her long brown hands. She tried to drink some coffee again, but it splashed out of the cup, on to her hands and her dress, and she put the cup down. Jason watched her.

'I can't swallow it,' Nancy said. 'I swallows but it won't go down me.'

'You go down to the cabin,' Dilsey said. 'Frony will fix you a pallet and I'll be there soon.'

'Won't no nigger stop him?' Nancy said.

'I ain't a nigger,' Jason said. 'Am I, Dilsey?'

'I reckon not,' Dilsey said. She looked at Nancy. 'I don't reckon so. What you going to do then?'

Nancy looked at us. Her eyes went fast, like she was afraid there wasn't time to look, without hardly moving at all. She looked at us, at all three of us at one time. 'You 'member that night I stayed in yaws' room?' she said. She told about how we waked up early the next morning, and played. We had to play quiet, on her pallet, until father woke and it was time for her to go down and get breakfast. 'Go and ask you maw to let me stay here

to-night,' Nancy said. 'I won't need no pallet. We can play some more,' she said.

Caddy asked mother. Jason went too. 'I can't have negroes sleeping in the house,' mother said. Jason cried. He cried until mother said he couldn't have any dessert for three days if he didn't stop. Then Jason said he would stop if Dilsey would make a chocolate cake. Father was there.

'Why don't you do something about it?' mother said. 'What do we have officers for?'

'Why is Nancy afraid of Jubah?' Caddy said. 'Are you afraid of father, mother?'

'What could they do?' father said. 'If Nancy hasn't seen him, how could the officers find him?'

'Then why is she afraid?' mother said.

'She says he is there. She says she knows he is there to-night.'

'Yet we pay taxes,' mother said. 'I must wait here alone in this big house while you take a negro woman home.'

'You know that I am not lying outside with a razor,' father said.

'I'll stop if Dilsey will make a chocolate cake,' Jason said. Mother told us to go out and father said he didn't know if Jason would get a chocolate cake or not, but he knew what Jason was going to get in about a minute. We went back to the kitchen and told Nancy.

'Father said for you to go home and lock the door, and you'll be all right,' Caddy said. 'All right from what, Nancy? Is Jubah mad at you?' Nancy was holding the coffee cup in her hands, her elbows on her knees and her hands holding the cup between her knees. She was looking into the cup. 'What have you done that made Jubah mad?' Caddy said. Nancy let the cup go. It didn't break on the floor, but the coffee spilled out, and Nancy sat there with her hands making the shape of the cup. She began to make the sound again, not loud. Not singing and not un-singing. We watched her.

'Here,' Dilsey said. 'You quit that, now. You get a hold of yourself. You wait here. I going to get Versh to walk home with you.' Dilsey went out.

We looked at Nancy. Her shoulders kept shaking, but she had quit making the sound. We watched her. 'What's Jubah going to do to you?' Caddy said. 'He went away.'

Nancy looked at us. 'We had fun that night I stayed in yawls' room, didn't we?'

'I didn't,' Jason said. 'I didn't have any fun.'

'You were asleep,' Caddy said. 'You were not there.'

'Let's go down to my house and have some more fun,' Nancy said.

'Mother won't let us,' I said. 'It's too late now.'

'Don't bother her,' Nancy said. 'We can tell her in the morning. She won't mind.'

'She wouldn't let us,' I said.

'Don't ask her now,' Nancy said. 'Don't bother her now.'

'They didn't say we couldn't go,' Caddy said.

'We didn't ask,' I said.

'If you go, I'll tell,' Jason said.

'We'll have fun,' Nancy said. 'They won't mind, just to my house. I been working for yawl a long time. They won't mind.'

'I'm not afraid to go,' Caddy said. 'Jason is the one that's afraid. He'll tell.'

'I'm not,' Jason said.

'Yes, you are,' Caddy said. 'You'll tell.'

'I won't tell,' Jason said. 'I'm not afraid.'

'Jason ain't afraid to go with me,' Nancy said. 'Is you, Jason?'

'Jason is going to tell,' Caddy said. The lane was dark. We passed the pasture gate. 'I bet if something was to jump out from behind that gate, Jason would holler.'

'I wouldn't,' Jason said. We walked down the lane. Nancy was talking loud.

'What are you talking so loud for, Nancy?' Caddy said.

'Who? Me?' Nancy said. 'Listen at Quentin and Caddy and Jason saying I'm talking loud.'

'You talk like there was four of us here,' Caddy said. 'You talk like father was here too.'

'Who; me talking loud, Mr. Jason?' Nancy said.

'Nancy called Jason "Mister,"' Caddy said.

'Listen how Caddy and Quentin and Jason talk,' Nancy said.

'We're not talking loud,' Caddy said. 'You're the one that's talking like father —'

'Hush,' Nancy said; 'hush, Mr. Jason.'

'Nancy called Jason "Mister" aguh —'

'Hush,' Nancy said. She was talking loud when we crossed the ditch and stooped through the fence where she used to stoop through with the clothes on her head. Then we came to her house. We were going fast then. She opened the door. The smell of the house was like the lamp and the smell of Nancy was like the wick, like they were waiting for one another to smell. She lit the lamp and closed the door and put the bar up. Then she quit talking loud, looking at us.

'What're we going to do?' Caddy said.

'What you all want to do?' Nancy said.

'You said we would have some fun,' Caddy said.

There was something about Nancy's house; something you could smell. Jason smelled it, even. 'I don't want to stay here,' he said. 'I want to go home.'

'Then go home,' Caddy said.

'I don't want to go by myself,' Jason said.

'We're going to have some fun,' Nancy said.

'How?' Caddy asked.

Nancy stood by the door. She was looking at us, only it was like she had emptied her eyes, like she had quit using them.

'What do you want to do?' she said.

'Tell us a story,' Caddy said. 'Can you tell a story?'

'Yes,' Nancy said.

'Tell it,' Caddy said. We looked at Nancy. 'You don't know any stories,' Caddy said.

'Yes,' Nancy said. 'Yes, I do.'

She came and sat down in a chair before the hearth. There was some fire there; she built it up; it was already hot. You didn't need a fire. She built a good blaze. She told a story. She talked like her eyes looked, like her eyes watching us and

her voice talking to us did not belong to her. Like she was living somewhere else, waiting somewhere else. She was outside the house. Her voice was there and the shape of her, the Nancy that could stoop under the fence with the bundle of clothes balanced as though without weight, like a balloon, on her head, was there. But that was all. 'And so this here queen come walking up to the ditch, where that bad man was hiding. She was walking up the ditch, and she say, "If I can just get past this here ditch," was what she say. . . .'

'What ditch?' Caddy said. 'A ditch like that one out there? Why did the queen go into the ditch?'

'To get to her house,' Nancy said. She looked at us. 'She had to cross that ditch to get home.'

'Why did she want to go home?' Caddy said.

IV

Nancy looked at us. She quit talking. She looked at us. Jason's legs stuck straight out of his pants, because he was little. 'I don't think that's a good story,' he said. 'I want to go home.'

'Maybe we had better,' Caddy said. She got up from the floor. 'I bet they are looking for us right now.' She went toward the door.

'No,' Nancy said. 'Don't open it.' She got up quick and passed Caddy. She didn't touch the door, the wooden bar.

'Why not?' Caddy said.

'Come back to the lamp,' Nancy said. 'We'll have fun. You don't have to go.'

'We ought to go,' Caddy said. 'Unless we have a lot of fun.' She and Nancy came back to the fire, the lamp.

'I want to go home,' Jason said. 'I'm going to tell.'

'I know another story,' Nancy said. She stood close to the lamp. She looked at Caddy, like when your eyes look up at a stick balanced on your nose. She had to look down to see Caddy, but her eyes looked like that, like when you are balancing a stick.

'I won't listen to it,' Jason said. 'I'll bang on the floor.'

'It's a good one,' Nancy said. 'It's better than the other one.'

'What's it about?' Caddy said. Nancy was standing by the lamp. Her hand was on the lamp, against the light, long and brown.

'Your hand is on that hot globe,' Caddy said. 'Don't it feel hot to your hand?'

Nancy looked at her hand on the lamp chimney. She took her hand away, slow. She stood there, looking at Caddy, wringing her long hand as though it were tied to her wrist with a string.

'Let's do something else,' Caddy said.

'I want to go home,' Jason said.

'I got some popcorn,' Nancy said. She looked at Caddy and then at Jason and then at me and then at Caddy again. 'I got some popcorn.'

'I don't like popcorn,' Jason said. 'I'd rather have candy.'

Nancy looked at Jason. 'You can hold the popper.' She was still wringing her hand; it was long and limp and brown.

'All right,' Jason said. 'I'll stay a while if I can do that. Caddy can't hold it. I'll want to go home if Caddy holds the popper.'

Nancy built up the fire. 'Look at Nancy putting her hands in the fire,' Caddy said. 'What's the matter with you, Nancy?'

'I got popcorn,' Nancy said. 'I got some.' She took the popper from under the bed. It was broken. Jason began to cry.

'We can't have any popcorn,' he said.

'We ought to go home, anyway,' Caddy said. 'Come on, Quentin.'

'Wait,' Nancy said; 'wait. I can fix it. Don't you want to help me fix it?'

'I don't think I want any,' Caddy said. 'It's too late now.'

'You help me, Jason,' Nancy said. 'Don't you want to help me?'

'No,' Jason said. 'I want to go home.'

'Hush,' Nancy said; 'hush. Watch. Watch me. I can fix it so Jason can hold it and pop the corn.' She got a piece of wire and fixed the popper.

'It won't hold good,' Caddy said.

'Yes it will,' Nancy said. 'Yawl watch. Yawl help me shell the corn.'

The corn was under the bed too. We shelled it into the popper and Nancy helped Jason hold the popper over the fire.

'It's not popping,' Jason said. 'I want to go home.'

'You wait,' Nancy said. 'It'll begin to pop. We'll have fun then.' She was sitting close to the fire. The lamp was turned up so high it was beginning to smoke.

'Why don't you turn it down some?' I said.

'It's all right,' Nancy said. 'I'll clean it. Yawl wait. The popcorn will start in a minute.'

'I don't believe it's going to start,' Caddy said. 'We ought to go home, anyway. They'll be worried.'

'No,' Nancy said. 'It's going to pop. Dilsey will tell um yawl with me. I been working for yawl long time. They won't mind if you at my house. You wait, now. It'll start popping in a minute.'

Then Jason got some smoke in his eyes and he began to cry. He dropped the popper into the fire. Nancy got a wet rag and wiped Jason's face, but he didn't stop crying.

'Hush,' she said. 'Hush.' He didn't hush. Caddy took the popper out of the fire.

'It's burned up,' she said. 'You'll have to get some more popcorn, Nancy.'

'Did you put all of it in?' Nancy said.

'Yes,' Caddy said. Nancy looked at Caddy. Then she took the popper and opened it and poured the blackened popcorn into her apron and began to sort the grains, her hands long and brown, and we watching her.

'Haven't you got any more?' Caddy said.

'Yes,' Nancy said; 'yes. Look. This here ain't burnt. All we need to do is ——'

'I want to go home,' Jason said. 'I'm going to tell.'

'Hush,' Caddy said. We all listened. Nancy's head was already turned toward the barred door, her eyes filled with red lamplight. 'Somebody is coming,' Caddy said.

Then Nancy began to make that sound again, not loud, sitting there above the fire, her long hands dangling between her knees; all of a sudden water began to come out on her face in big drops, running down her face, carrying in each one a little turning ball of firelight until it dropped off her chin.

'She's not crying,' I said.

'I ain't crying,' Nancy said. Her eyes were closed. 'I ain't crying. Who is it?'

'I don't know,' Caddy said. She went to the door and looked out. 'We've got to go home now,' she said. 'Here comes father.'

'I'm going to tell,' Jason said. 'You all made me come.'

The water still ran down Nancy's face. She turned in her chair. 'Listen. Tell him. Tell him we going to have fun. Tell him I take good care of yawl until in the morning. Tell him to let me come home with yawl and sleep on the floor. Tell him I won't need no pallet. We'll have fun. You 'member last time how we had so much fun?'

'I didn't have any fun,' Jason said. 'You hurt me. You put smoke in my eyes.'

V

Father came in. He looked at us. Nancy did not get up.

'Tell him,' she said.

'Caddy made us come down here,' Jason said. 'I didn't want to.'

Father came to the fire. Nancy looked up at him. 'Can't you go to Aunt Rachel's and stay?' he said. Nancy looked up at father, her hands between her knees. 'He's not here,' father said. 'I would have seen. There wasn't a soul in sight.'

'He in the ditch,' Nancy said. 'He waiting in the ditch yonder.'

'Nonsense,' father said. He looked at Nancy. 'Do you know he's there?'

'I got the sign,' Nancy said.

'What sign?'

'I got it. It was on the table when I come in. It was a hog

bone, with blood meat still on it, laying by the lamp. He's out there. When yawl walk out that door, I gone.'

'Who's gone, Nancy?' Caddy said.

'I'm not a tattletale,' Jason said.

'Nonsense,' father said.

'He out there,' Nancy said. 'He looking through that window this minute, waiting for yawl to go. Then I gone.'

'Nonsense,' father said. 'Lock up your house and we'll take you on to Aunt Rachel's.'

'Twon't do no good,' Nancy said. She didn't look at father now, but he looked down at her, at her long, limp, moving hands.

'Putting it off won't do no good.'

'Then what do you want to do?' father said.

'I don't know,' Nancy said. 'I can't do nothing. Just put it off. And that don't do no good. I reckon it belong to me. I reckon what I going to get ain't no more than mine.'

'Get what?' Caddy said. 'What's yours?'

'Nothing,' father said. 'You all must get to bed.'

'Caddy made me come,' Jason said.

'Go on to Aunt Rachel's,' father said.

'It won't do no good,' Nancy said. She sat before the fire, her elbows on her knees, her long hands between her knees. 'When even your own kitchen wouldn't do no good. When even if I was sleeping on the floor in the room with your own children, and the next morning there I am, and blood all ——'

'Hush,' father said. 'Lock the door and put the lamp out and go to bed.'

'I scared of the dark,' Nancy said. 'I scared for it to happen in the dark.'

'You mean you're going to sit right here, with the lamp lighted?' father said. Then Nancy began to make the sound again, sitting before the fire, her long hands between her knees. 'Ah, damnation,' father said. 'Come along, chillen. It's bedtime.'

'When yawl go, I gone,' Nancy said. 'I be dead to-morrow. I done had saved up the coffin money with Mr. Lovelady ——'

Mr. Lovelady was a short, dirty man who collected the negro insurance, coming around to the cabins and the kitchens every Saturday morning, to collect fifteen cents. He and his wife lived in the hotel. One morning his wife committed suicide. They had a child, a little girl. After his wife committed suicide Mr. Lovelady and the child went away. After a while Mr. Lovelady came back. We would see him going down the lanes on Saturday morning. He went to the Baptist church.

Father carried Jason on his back. We went out Nancy's door; she was sitting before the fire. 'Come and put the bar up,' father said. Nancy didn't move. She didn't look at us again. We left her there, sitting before the fire with the door opened, so that it wouldn't happen in the dark.

'What, father?' Caddy said. 'Why is Nancy scared of Jubah? What is Jubah going to do to her?'

'Jubah wasn't there,' Jason said.

'No,' father said. 'He's not there. He's gone away.'

'Who is it that's waiting in the ditch?' Caddy said. We looked at the ditch. We came to it, where the path went down into the thick vines and went up again.

'Nobody,' father said.

There was just enough moon to see by. The ditch was vague, thick, quiet. 'If he's there, he can see us, can't he?' Caddy said.

'You made me come,' Jason said, on father's back. 'I didn't want to.'

The ditch was quite still, quite empty, massed with honeysuckle. We couldn't see Jubah, any more than we could see Nancy sitting there in her house, with the door open and the lamp burning, because she didn't want it to happen in the dark. 'I just done got tired,' Nancy said. 'I just a nigger. It ain't no fault of mine.'

But we could still hear her. She began as soon as we were out of the house, sitting there above the fire, her long brown hands between her knees. We could still hear her when we had crossed the ditch, Jason high and close and little about father's head.

Then we had crossed the ditch, walking out of Nancy's life. Then her life was sitting there with the door open and the lamp lit, waiting, and the ditch between us, and we going on, the white people going on, dividing the impinged lives of us and Nancy.

'Who will do our washing now, father?' I said.

'I'm not a nigger,' Jason said on father's shoulders.

'You're worse,' Caddy said, 'you are a tattletale. If something was to jump out, you'd be scairder than a nigger.'

'I wouldn't,' Jason said.

'You'd cry,' Caddy said.

'Caddy!' father said.

'I wouldn't,' Jason said.

'Scairy cat,' Caddy said.

'Candace!' father said.

Babylon Revisited

BY F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

(From *The Saturday Evening Post*)

I

AND where's Mr. Campbell?' Charlie asked. 'Gone to Switzerland. Mr. Campbell's a pretty sick man, Mr. Wales.'

'I'm sorry to hear that. And George Hardt?' Charlie inquired.

'Back in America, gone to work.'

'And where is the snow bird?'

'He was in here last week. Anyway, his friend, Mr. Schaeffer, is in Paris.'

Two familiar names from the long list of a year and a half ago. Charlie scribbled an address in his note-book and tore out the page.

'If you see Mr. Schaeffer, give him this,' he said. 'It's my brother-in-law's address. I haven't settled on an hotel yet.'

He was not really disappointed to find Paris was so empty. But the stillness in the bar was strange, almost portentous.

It was not an American bar any more — he felt polite in it, and not as if he owned it. It had gone back into France. He had felt the stillness from the moment he got out of the taxi and saw the doorman, usually in a frenzy of activity at this hour, gossiping with a *chasseur* by the servants' entrance.

Passing through the corridor, he heard only a single, bored voice in the once-clamorous women's room. When he turned into the bar he travelled the twenty feet of green carpet with his eyes fixed straight ahead by old habit; and then, with his foot firmly on the rail, he turned and surveyed the room, encountering only a single pair of eyes that fluttered up from a newspaper in the corner. Charlie asked for the head barman, Paul, who in the latter days of the bull market had come to work in his own

custom-built car — disembarking, however, with due nicety at the nearest corner. But Paul was at his country house to-day and Alix was giving him his information.

‘No, no more. I’m going slow these days.’

Alix congratulated him: ‘Hope you stick to it, Mr. Wales. You were going pretty strong a couple of years ago.’

‘I’ll stick to it all right,’ Charlie assured him. ‘I’ve stuck to it for over a year and a half now.’

‘How do you find conditions in America?’

‘I haven’t been to America for months. I’m in business in Prague, representing a couple of concerns there. They don’t know about me down there.’ He smiled faintly. ‘Remember the night of George Hardt’s bachelor dinner here? . . . By the way, what’s become of Claude Fessenden?’

Alix lowered his voice confidentially: ‘He’s in Paris, but he doesn’t come here any more. Paul doesn’t allow it. He ran up a bill of thirty thousand francs, charging all his drinks and his lunches, and usually his dinner, for more than a year. And when Paul finally told him he had to pay, he gave him a bad cheque.’

Alix pressed his lips together and shook his head.

‘I don’t understand it, such a dandy fellow. Now he’s all bloated up ——’ He made a plump apple of his hands.

A thin world, resting on a common weakness, shredded away now like tissue paper. Turning, Charlie saw a group of effeminate young men installing themselves in a corner.

‘Nothing affects them,’ he thought. ‘Stocks rise and fall, people loaf or work, but they go on for ever.’ The place oppressed him. He called for the dice and shook with Alix for the drink.

‘Here for long, Mr. Wales?’

‘I’m here for four or five days to see my little girl.’

‘Oh-h! You have a little girl?’

Outside, the fire-red, gas-blue, ghost-green signs shone smokily through the tranquil rain. It was late afternoon and the streets were in movement; the *bistros* gleamed. At the corner of the Boulevard des Capucines he took a taxi. The Place de la Concorde moved by in pink majesty; they crossed the logical Seine,

and Charlie felt the sudden provincial quality of the left bank.

'I spoiled this city for myself,' he thought. 'I didn't realize it, but the days came along one after another, and then two years were gone, and everything was gone, and I was gone.'

He was thirty-five, a handsome man, with the Irish mobility of his face sobered by a deep wrinkle between his eyes. As he rang his brother-in-law's bell in the Rue Palatine, the wrinkle deepened till it pulled down his brows; he felt a cramping sensation in his belly. From behind the maid who opened the door darted a lovely little girl of nine who shrieked 'Daddy!' and flew up, struggling like a fish, into his arms. She pulled his head around by one ear and set her cheek against his.

'My old pie,' he said.

'Oh, daddy, daddy, daddy, daddy, dads, dads, dads!'

She drew him into the salon, where the family waited, a boy and girl his daughter's age, his sister-in-law and her husband. He greeted Marion with his voice pitched carefully to avoid either feigned enthusiasm or dislike, but her response was more frankly tepid, and she minimized her expression of unshakable distrust by directing her regard toward his child. The two men clasped hands in a friendly way and Lincoln Peters rested his for a moment on Charlie's shoulder.

The room was warm and comfortably American. The three children moved intimately about, playing through the yellow oblongs that led to other rooms; the cheer of six o'clock spoke in the eager smacks of the fire and the sounds of French activity in the kitchen. But Charlie did not relax; his heart sat up rigidly in his body and he drew confidence from his daughter, who from time to time came close to him, holding in her arms the doll he had brought.

'Really extremely well,' he declared in answer to Lincoln's question. 'There's a lot of business there that isn't moving at all, but we're doing even better than ever. In fact, damn well. I'm bringing my sister over from America next month to keep house for me. In fact, my income is bigger than it was when I had money. You see, the Czechs ——'

His boasting was for a specific purpose; but after a moment, seeing a faint restiveness in Lincoln's eye, he changed the subject:

'Those are fine children of yours, well brought up, good manners.'

'We think Honoria's a great little girl too.'

Marion Peters came back into the little salon. She was a tall woman with worried eyes, who had once possessed a fresh American loveliness. Charlie had never been sensitive to it and was always surprised when people spoke of how pretty she had been. From the first there had been an instinctive antipathy between them.

'Well, how do you find Honoria?' she asked.

'Wonderful. I was astonished how much she's grown in ten months. All the children are looking well.'

'We haven't had a doctor for a year. How do you like being back in Paris?'

'It seems very funny to see so few Americans around.'

'I'm delighted,' Marion said vehemently. 'Now at least you can go into a store without their assuming you're a millionaire. We've suffered like everybody, but on the whole it's a good deal pleasanter.'

'But it was nice while it lasted,' Charlie said. 'We were a sort of royalty, almost infallible, with a sort of magic around us. In the bar this afternoon'—he stumbled, seeing his mistake—'there wasn't a man I knew.'

She looked at him keenly. 'I should think you'd have had enough of bars.'

'I only stayed a minute. I take one drink every afternoon, and no more.'

'Don't you want a cocktail before dinner?' Lincoln asked.

'I take only one drink every afternoon, and I've had that.'

'I hope you keep to it,' said Marion.

Her dislike was evident in the coldness with which she spoke, but Charlie only smiled; he had larger plans. Her very aggressiveness gave him an advantage, and he knew enough to wait.

He wanted them to initiate the discussion of what they knew had brought him to Paris.

Honorina was to spend the following afternoon with him. At dinner he couldn't decide whether she was most like him or her mother. Fortunate if she didn't combine the traits of both that had brought them to disaster. A great wave of protectiveness went over him. He thought he knew what to do for her. He believed in character; he wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element. Everything wore out now. Parents expected genius, or at least brilliance, and both the forcing of children and the fear of forcing them, the fear of warping natural abilities, were poor substitutes for that long, careful watchfulness, that checking and balancing and reckoning of accounts, the end of which was that there should be no slipping below a certain level of duty and integrity.

That was what the elders had been unable to teach plausibly since the break between the generations ten or twelve years ago.

He left soon after dinner, but not to go home. He was curious to see Paris by night with clearer and more judicious eyes. He bought a *strapontin* for the Casino and watched Josephine Baker go through her chocolate arabesques.

After an hour he left and strolled toward Montmartre, up the Rue Pigalle into the Place Blanche. The rain had stopped and there were a few people in evening clothes disembarking from taxis in front of cabarets, and *cocottes* prowling singly or in pairs, and many negroes. He passed a lighted door from which issued music, and stopped with the sense of familiarity; it was Bricktop's, where he had parted with so many hours and so much money. A few doors farther on he found another ancient rendezvous and incautiously put his head inside. Immediately an eager orchestra burst into sound, a pair of professional dancers leaped to their feet and a *maître d'hôtel* swooped toward him, crying 'Crowd just arriving, sir!' But he withdrew quickly.

'You have to be damn drunk,' he thought.

Zelli's was closed, the bleak and sinister cheap hotels surrounding it were dark; up in the Rue Blanche there was more light and

a local, colloquial French crowd. The Poet's Cave had disappeared, but the two great mouths of the Café of Heaven and the Café of Hell still yawned — even devoured, as he watched the meagre contents of a tourist bus — a German, a Japanese, and an American couple who glanced at him with frightened eyes.

So much for the effort and ingenuity of Montmartre. All the catering to vice and waste was on an utterly childish scale, and he suddenly realized the meaning of the word 'dissipate' — to dissipate into thin air; to make nothing out of something. In the little hours of the night every move from place to place was an enormous human jump, an increase of paying for the privilege of slower and slower motion.

He remembered thousand-franc notes given to an orchestra for playing a single number, hundred-franc notes tossed to a doorman for calling a cab.

But it hadn't been given for nothing.

It had been given, even the most wildly squandered sum, as an offering to destiny that he might not remember the things most worth remembering, the things that now he would always remember — his child taken from his control, his wife escaped to a grave in Vermont.

In the glare of a *brasserie* a woman spoke to him. He bought her some eggs and coffee, and then, eluding her encouraging stare, gave her a twenty-franc note and took a taxi to his hotel.

II

He woke upon a fine fall day — football weather. The depression of yesterday was gone, and he liked the people on the streets. At noon he sat opposite Honoria at the Grand Vatel, the only restaurant he could think of not reminiscent of champagne dinners and long luncheons that began at two and ended in a blurred and vague twilight.

'Now, how about vegetables? Oughtn't you to have some vegetables?'

'Well, yes.'

'Here's *épinards* and *choux-fleurs* and carrots and haricots.'

'I'd like *choux-fleurs*.'

'Wouldn't you like to have two vegetables?'

'I usually have only one at lunch.'

The waiter was pretending to be inordinately fond of children.

'Qu'elle est mignonne, la petite! Elle parle exactement comme une française.'

'How about dessert? Shall we wait and see?'

The waiter disappeared. Honoria looked at him expectantly.

'What are we going to do?'

'First we're going to that toy store in the Rue St.-Honoré and buy anything you like. And then we're going to the vaudeville at the Empire.'

She hesitated. 'I like it about the vaudeville, but not the toy store.'

'Why not?'

'Well, you brought me this doll.' She had it with her. 'And I've got lots of things. And we're not rich any more, are we?'

'We never were. But to-day you are to have anything you want.'

'All right,' she agreed resignedly.

He had always been fond of her, but when there had been her mother and a French nurse he had been inclined to be strict; now he extended himself, reached out for a new tolerance; he must be both parents to her and not shut any of her out of communication.

'I want to get to know you,' he said gravely 'First let me introduce myself. My name is Charles J. Wales, of Prague.'

'Oh, daddy!' her voice cracked with laughter.

'And who are you, please?' he persisted, and she accepted a role immediately:

'Honorina Wales, Rue Palatine, Paris.'

'Married or single?'

'No, not married. Single.'

He indicated the doll. 'But I see you have a child, madame.'

Unwilling to disinherit it, she took it to her heart and thought quickly: 'Yes, I've been married, but I'm not married now. My husband is dead.'

He went on quickly, 'And the child's name?'

'Simone. That's after my best friend at school.'

'I'm very pleased that you're doing so well at school.'

'I'm third this month,' she boasted. 'Elsie'—that was her cousin—'is only about eighteenth, and Richard is about at the bottom.'

'You like Richard and Elsie, don't you?'

'Oh, yes. I like Richard quite well, and I like her all right.'

Cautiously and casually he asked: 'And Aunt Marion and Uncle Lincoln—which do you like best?'

'Oh, Uncle Lincoln, I guess.'

He was increasingly aware of her presence. As they came in, a murmur of 'What an adorable child' followed them, and now the people at the next table bent all their silences upon her, staring as if she were something no more conscious than a flower.

'Why don't I live with you?' she asked suddenly. 'Because mamma's dead?'

'You must stay here and learn more French. It would have been hard for daddy to take care of you so well.'

'I don't really need much taking care of any more. I do everything for myself.'

Going out of the restaurant, a man and a woman unexpectedly hailed him!

'Well, the old Wales!'

'Hello there, Lorraine. . . . Dunc.'

Sudden ghosts out of the past: Duncan Schaeffer, a friend from college, Lorraine Quarries, a lovely, pale blonde of thirty; one of a crowd who had helped them make months into days in the lavish times of two years ago.

'My husband couldn't come this year,' she said, in answer to his question. 'We're poor as hell. So he gave me two hundred a month and told me I could do my worst on that. . . . This your little girl?'

'What about sitting down?' Duncan asked.

'Can't do it.' He was glad for an excuse. As always, he felt Lorraine's passionate, provocative attraction, but his own rhythm was different now.

'Well, how about dinner?' she asked.

'I'm not free. Give me your address and let me call you.'

'Charlie, I believe you're sober,' she said judicially. 'I honestly believe he's sober, Dunc. Pinch him and see if he's sober.'

Charlie indicated Honoria with his head. They both laughed.

'What's your address?' said Duncan sceptically.

He hesitated, unwilling to give the name of his hotel.

'I'm not settled yet. I'd better call you. We're going to see the vaudeville at the Empire.'

'There! That's what I want to do,' Lorraine said. 'I want to see some clowns and acrobats and jugglers. That's just what we'll do, Dunc.'

'We've got to do an errand first,' said Charlie. 'Perhaps we'll see you there.'

'All right, you snob. . . . Good-bye, beautiful little girl.'

'Good-bye.' Honoria bobbed politely.

Somehow, an unpleasant encounter, Charlie thought. They liked him because he was functioning, because he was serious; they wanted to see him, because he was stronger than they were now, because they wanted to draw a certain sustenance from his strength.

At the Empire, Honoria proudly refused to sit upon her father's folded coat. She was already an individual with a code of her own, and Charlie was more and more absorbed by the desire of putting a little of himself into her before she crystallized utterly. It was hopeless to try to know her in so short a time.

Between the acts they came upon Duncan and Lorraine in the lobby where the band was playing.

'Have a drink?'

'All right, but not up at the bar. We'll take a table.'

'The perfect father.'

Listening abstractedly to Lorraine, Charlie watched Honoria's

eyes leave them all, and he followed them wistfully about the room, wondering what they saw. He met them and she smiled.

'I liked that lemonade,' she said.

What had she said? What had he expected? Going home in a taxi afterward, he pulled her over until her head rested against his chest.

'Darling, do you ever think about your mother?'

'Yes, sometimes,' she answered vaguely.

'I don't want you to forget her. Have you got a picture of her?'

'Yes, I think so. Anyhow, Aunt Marion has. Why don't you want me to forget her?'

'She loved you very much.'

'I loved her too.'

They were silent for a moment.

'Daddy, I want to come and live with you,' she said suddenly.

His heart leaped; he had wanted it to come like this.

'Aren't you perfectly happy?'

'Yes, but I love you better than anybody. And you love me better than anybody, don't you, now that mummy's dead?'

'Of course I do. But you won't always like me best, honey. You'll grow up and meet somebody your own age and go marry him and forget you ever had a daddy.'

'Yes, that's true,' she agreed tranquilly.

He didn't go in. He was coming back at nine o'clock, and he wanted to keep himself fresh and new for the thing he must say then.

'When you're safe inside, just show yourself in that window.'

'All right. Good-bye, dads, dads, dads, dads.'

He waited in the dark street until she appeared, all warm and glowing, in the window above and kissed her fingers out into the night.

III

They were waiting. Marion sat behind empty coffee cups in a dignified black dinner dress that just faintly suggested mourn-

ing. Lincoln was walking up and down with the animation of one who had already been talking. They were as anxious as he was to get into the question. He opened it almost immediately:

‘I suppose you know what I want to see you about — why I really came to Paris.’

Marion fiddled with the glass grapes on her necklace and frowned.

‘I’m awfully anxious to have a home,’ he continued. ‘And I’m awfully anxious to have Honoria in it. I appreciate your taking in Honoria for her mother’s sake, but things have changed now’ — he hesitated and then continued strongly — ‘changed radically with me, and I want to ask you to reconsider the matter. It would be silly for me to deny that about two years ago I was acting badly —’

Marion looked up at him with hard eyes.

“—— but all that’s over. As I told you, I haven’t had more than a drink a day for over a year, and I take that drink deliberately, so that the idea of alcohol won’t get too big in my imagination. You see the idea?”

‘No,’ said Marion succinctly.

‘It’s a sort of stunt I set myself. It keeps the matter in proportion.’

‘I get you,’ said Lincoln. ‘You don’t want to admit it’s got any attraction for you.’

‘Something like that. Sometimes I forget and don’t take it. But I try to take it. Anyhow, I couldn’t afford to drink in my position. The people I represent are more than satisfied with what I’ve done, and I’m bringing my sister over from Burlington to keep house for me, and I want awfully to have Honoria too. You know that even when her mother and I weren’t getting along well I never let anything that happened touch Honoria. I know she’s fond of me, and I know I’m able to take care of her and — well, there you are. How do you feel about it?’

He knew that now he would have to take a beating. It would last an hour or two hours, and it would be difficult, but if he modulated his inevitable resentment to the chastened attitude

of the reformed sinner, he might win his point in the end. 'Keep your temper,' he told himself. 'You don't want to be justified. You want Honoria.'

Lincoln spoke first: 'We've been talking it over ever since we got your letter last month. We're happy to have Honoria here. She's a dear little thing, and we're glad to be able to help her, but of course that isn't the question ——'

Marion interrupted suddenly. 'How long are you going to stay sober, Charlie?' she asked.

'Permanently, I hope.'

'How can anybody count on that?'

'You know I never did drink heavily until I gave up business and came over here with nothing to do. Then Helen and I began to run around with ——'

'Please leave Helen out of it. I can't bear to hear you talk about her like that.'

He stared at her grimly; he had never been certain how fond of each other the sisters were in life.

'My drinking only lasted about a year and a half — from the time we came over until I — collapsed.'

'It was time enough.'

'It was time enough,' he agreed.

'My duty is entirely to Helen,' she said. 'I try to think what she would have wanted me to do. Frankly, from the night you did that terrible thing you haven't really existed for me. I can't help that. She was my sister.'

'Yes.'

'When she was dying she asked me to look out for Honoria. If you hadn't been in a sanatorium then, it might have helped matters.'

He had no answer.

'I'll never in my life be able to forget the morning when Helen knocked at my door, soaked to the skin and shivering, and said you'd locked her out.'

Charlie gripped the sides of the chair. This was more difficult than he expected; he wanted to launch out into a long expostula-

tion and explanation, but he only said: 'The night I locked her out ——' and she interrupted, 'I don't feel up to going over that again.'

After a moment's silence Lincoln said: 'We're getting off the subject. You want Marion to set aside her legal guardianship and give you Honoria. I think the main point for her is whether she has confidence in you or not.'

'I don't blame Marion,' Charlie said slowly, 'but I think she can have entire confidence in me. I had a good record up to three years ago. Of course, it's within human possibilities I might go wrong any time. But if we wait much longer I'll lose Honoria's childhood and my chance for a home. I'll simply lose her, don't you see?'

'Yes, I see,' said Lincoln.

'Why didn't you think of all this before?' Marion asked.

'I suppose I did, from time to time, but Helen and I were getting along badly. When I consented to the guardianship, I was flat on my back in a sanatorium and the market had cleaned me out of every sou. I knew I'd acted badly, and I thought if it would bring any peace to Helen, I'd agree to anything. But now it's different. I'm well, I'm functioning, I'm behaving damn well, so far as ——'

'Please don't swear at me,' Marion said.

He looked at her, startled. With each remark the force of her dislike became more and more apparent. She had built up all her fear of life into one wall and faced it toward him. This trivial reproof was possibly the result of some trouble with the cook several hours before. Charlie became increasingly alarmed at leaving Honoria in this atmosphere of hostility against himself; sooner or later it would come out, in a word here, a shake of the head there, and some of that distrust would be irrevocably implanted in Honoria. But he pulled his temper down out of his face and shut it up inside him; he had won a point, for Lincoln realized the absurdity of Marion's remark and asked her lightly since when she had objected to the word 'damn.'

'Another thing,' Charlie said: 'I'm able to give her certain

advantages now. I'm going to take a French governess to Prague with me. I've got a lease on a new apartment ——'

He stopped, realizing that he was blundering. They couldn't be expected to accept with equanimity the fact that his income was again twice as large as their own.

'I suppose you can give her more luxuries than we can,' said Marion. 'When you were throwing away money we were living along watching every ten francs. . . . I suppose you'll start doing it again.'

'Oh, no,' he said. 'I've learned. I worked hard for ten years, you know — until I got lucky in the market, like so many people. Terribly lucky. It didn't seem any use working any more, so I quit. It won't happen again.'

There was a long silence. All of them felt their nerves straining, and for the first time in a year Charlie wanted a drink. He was sure now that Lincoln Peters wanted him to have his child.

Marion shuddered suddenly; part of her saw that Charlie's feet were planted on the earth now, and her own maternal feeling recognized the naturalness of his desire; but she had lived for a long time with a prejudice — a prejudice founded on a curious disbelief in her sister's happiness, and which, in the shock of one terrible night, had turned to hatred for him. It had all happened at a point in her life where the discouragement of ill-health and adverse circumstances made it necessary for her to believe in tangible villainy and a tangible villain.

'I can't help what I think!' she cried out suddenly. 'How much you were responsible for Helen's death, I don't know. It's something you'll have to square with your own conscience.'

An electric current of agony surged through him; for a moment he was almost on his feet, an unuttered sound echoing in his throat. He hung on to himself for a moment, another moment.

'Hold on there,' said Lincoln uncomfortably. 'I never thought you were responsible for that.'

'Helen died of heart trouble,' Charlie said dully.

'Yes, heart trouble.' Marion spoke as if the phrase had another meaning for her.

Then, in the flatness that followed her outburst, she saw him plainly and she knew he had somehow arrived at control over the situation. Glancing at her husband, she found no help from him, and as abruptly as if it were a matter of no importance, she threw up the sponge.

'Do what you like!' she cried, springing up from her chair. 'She's your child. I'm not the person to stand in your way. I think if it were my child I'd rather see her ——' She managed to check herself. 'You two decide it. I can't stand this. I'm sick. I'm going to bed.'

She hurried from the room. After a moment Lincoln said:

'This has been a hard day for her. You know how strongly she feels ——' His voice was almost apologetic: 'When a woman gets an idea in her head.'

'Of course.'

'It's going to be all right. I think she sees now that you — can provide for the child, and so we can't very well stand in your way or Honoria's way.'

'Thank you, Lincoln.'

'I'd better go along and see how she is.'

'I'm going.'

He was still trembling when he reached the street, but a walk down the Rue Bonaparte to the quays set him up, and as he crossed the Seine, dotted with many cold moons, he felt exultant. But back in his room he couldn't sleep. The image of Helen haunted him. Helen whom he had loved so until they had senselessly begun to abuse each other's love and tear it into shreds. On that terrible February night that Marion remembered so vividly, a slow quarrel that had gone on for hours. There was a scene at the Florida, and then he attempted to take her home, and then Helen kissed Ted Wilder at a table, and what she had hysterically said. Charlie's departure and, on his arrival home, his turning the key in the lock in wild anger. How could he know she would arrive an hour later alone, that there would be a snowstorm in which she wandered about in slippers for an hour, too confused to find a taxi? Then the aftermath, her escaping pneumonia by

a miracle, and all the attendant horror. They were 'reconciled,' but that was the beginning of the end, and Marion, who had seen with her own eyes and who imagined it to be one of many scenes from her sister's martyrdom, never forgot.

Going over it again brought Helen nearer, and in the white, soft light that steals upon half sleep near morning he found himself talking to her again. She said that he was perfectly right about Honoria and that she wanted Honoria to be with him. She said she was glad he was being good and doing better. She said a lot of other things — very friendly things — but she was in a swing in a white dress, and swinging faster and faster all the time, so that at the end he could not hear clearly all that she said.

IV

He woke up feeling happy. The door of the world was open again. He made plans, vistas, futures for Honoria and himself, but suddenly he grew sad, remembering all the plans he and Helen had made. She had not planned to die. The present was the thing — work to do and someone to love. But not to love too much, for Charlie had read in D. H. Lawrence about the injury that a father can do to a daughter or a mother to a son by attaching them too closely. Afterward, out in the world, the child would seek in the marriage partner the same blind, unselfish tenderness and, failing in all human probability to find it, develop a grudge against love and life.

It was another bright, crisp day. He called Lincoln Peters at the bank where he worked and asked if he could count on taking Honoria when he left for Prague. Lincoln agreed that there was no reason for delay. One thing — the legal guardianship. Marion wanted to retain that a while longer. She was upset by the whole matter, and it would oil things if she felt that the situation was still in her control for another year. Charlie agreed, wanting only the tangible, visible child.

Then the question of a governess. Charlie sat in a gloomy

agency and talked to a buxom Breton peasant whom he knew he couldn't endure. There were others whom he could see to-morrow.

He lunched with Lincoln Peters at the Griffon, trying to keep down his exultation.

'There's nothing quite like your own child,' Lincoln said. 'But you understand how Marion feels too.'

'She's forgotten how hard I worked for seven years there,' Charlie said. 'She just remembers one night.'

'There's another thing,' Lincoln hesitated. 'While you and Helen were tearing around Europe throwing money away, we were just getting along. I didn't touch any of the prosperity because I never got ahead enough to carry anything but my insurance. I think Marion felt there was some kind of injustice in it — you not even working and getting richer and richer.'

'It went just as quick as it came,' said Charlie.

'A lot did. And a lot of it stayed in the hands of *chasseurs* and saxophone players and *mâtres d'hôtel* — well, the big party's over now. I just said that to explain Marion's feeling about those crazy years. If you drop in about six o'clock to-night before Marion's too tired, we'll settle the details on the spot.'

Back at his hotel, Charlie took from his pocket a *pneumatique* that Lincoln had given him at luncheon. It had been redirected by Paul from the hotel bar.

DEAR CHARLIE,

You were so strange when we saw you the other day that I wondered if I did something to offend you. If so, I'm not conscious of it. In fact, I have thought about you too much for the last year, and it's always been in the back of my mind that I might see you if I came over here. We did have such good times that crazy spring, like the night you and I stole the butcher's tricycle, and the time we tried to call on the President and you had the old derby and the wire cane. Everybody seems so old lately, but I don't feel old a bit. Couldn't we get together sometime to-day for old time's sake? I've got

a vile hang-over for the moment, but will be feeling better this afternoon and will look for you about five at the bar.

Always devotedly,

LORRAINE.

His first feeling was one of awe that he had actually, in his mature years, stolen a tricycle and pedalled Lorraine all over the Étoile between the small hours and dawn. In retrospect it was a nightmare. Locking out Helen didn't fit in with any other act of his life, but the tricycle incident did — it was one of many. How many weeks or months of dissipation to arrive at that condition of utter irresponsibility?

He tried to picture how Lorraine had appeared to him then — very attractive; so much so that Helen had been jealous. Yesterday, in the restaurant, she had seemed trite, blurred, worn away. He emphatically did not want to see her, and he was glad no one knew at what hotel he was staying. It was a relief to think of Honoria, to think of Sundays spent with her and of saying 'good morning' to her and of knowing she was there in his house at night, breathing quietly in the darkness.

At five he took a taxi and bought presents for all the Peters — a piquant cloth doll, a box of Roman soldiers, flowers for Marion, big linen handkerchiefs for Lincoln.

He saw, when he arrived in the apartment, that Marion had accepted the inevitable. She greeted him now as though he were a recalcitrant member of the family, rather than a menacing outsider. Honoria had been told she was going, and Charlie was glad to see that her tact was sufficient to conceal her excessive happiness. Only on his lap did she whisper her delight and the question 'When?' before she slipped away.

He and Marion were alone for a minute in the room, and on an impulse he spoke out boldly:

'Family quarrels are bitter things. They don't go according to any rules. They're not like aches or wounds; they're more like splits in the skin that won't heal because there's not enough material. I wish you and I could be on better terms.'

'Some things are hard to forget,' she answered. 'It's a question of confidence. If you behave yourself in the future I won't have any criticism.' There was no answer to this, and presently she asked, 'When do you propose to take her?'

'As soon as I can get a governess. I hoped the day after tomorrow.'

'That's impossible. I've got to get her things in shape. Not before Saturday.' He yielded. Coming back into the room, Lincoln offered him a drink.

'I'll take my daily whisky,' he said.

It was warm here, it was a home, people together by a fire. The children felt very safe and important; the mother and father were serious, watchful. They had things to do for the children more important than his visit here. A spoonful of medicine was, after all, more important than the strained relations between Marion and himself. They were not dull people, but they were very much in the grip of life and circumstances, and their gestures as they turned in a cramped space lacked largeness and grace. He wondered if he couldn't do something to get Lincoln out of that rut at the bank.

There was a long peal at the door-bell; the maid crossed the room and went down the corridor. The door opened upon another long ring, and then voices, and the three in the salon looked up expectantly; Richard moved to bring the corridor within his range of vision, and Marion rose. Then the maid came along the corridor, closely followed by the voices, which developed under the light into Duncan Schaeffer and Lorraine Quarries.

They were gay, they were hilarious, they were roaring with laughter. For a moment Charlie was astounded; then he realized they had got the address he had left at the bar.

'Ah-h-h!' Duncan wagged his finger roguishly at Charlie. 'Ah-h-h!'

They both slid down into another cascade of laughter. Anxious and at a loss, Charlie shook hands with them quickly and presented them to Lincoln and Marion. Marion nodded, scarcely

speaking. She had drawn back a step toward the fire; her little girl stood beside her, and Marion put an arm about her shoulder.

With growing annoyance at the intrusion, Charlie waited for them to explain themselves. After some concentration Duncan said:

'We came to take you to dinner. Lorraine and I insist that all this shi-shi, cagy business got to stop.'

Charlie came closer to them, as if to force them backward down the corridor.

'Sorry, but I can't. Tell me where you'll be and we'll call you in half an hour.'

This made no impression. Lorraine sat down suddenly on the side of a chair, and focusing her eyes on Richard, cried, 'Oh, what a nice little boy! Come here, little boy.' Richard glanced at his mother, but did not move. With a perceptible shrug of her shoulders, Lorraine turned back to Charlie:

'Come on out to dinner. Be yourself, Charlie. Come on.'

'How about a little drink?' said Duncan to the room at large.

Lincoln Peters had been somewhat uneasily occupying himself by swinging Honoria from side to side with her feet off the ground.

'I'm sorry, but there isn't a thing in the house,' he said. 'We just this minute emptied the only bottle.'

'All the more reason for coming to dinner,' Lorraine assured Charlie.

'I can't,' said Charlie almost sharply. 'You two go have dinner and I'll phone you.'

'Oh, you will, will you?' Her voice became suddenly unpleasant. 'All right, we'll go along. But I remember, when you used to hammer on my door, I used to be enough of a good sport to give you a drink. Come on, Dunc.'

Still in slow motion, with blurred angry faces, with uncertain feet, they retired along the corridor.

'Good night,' Charlie said.

'Good night!' responded Lorraine emphatically.

When he went back into the salon Marion had not moved,

only now her son was standing in the circle on her other arm. Lincoln was still swinging Honoria back and forth like a pendulum from side to side.

'What an outrage!' Charlie broke out. 'What an absolute outrage!'

Neither of them answered. Charlie dropped into an armchair, picked up his drink, set it down again and said:

'People I haven't seen for two years having the colossal nerve ——'

He broke off. Marion had made the sound 'Oh!' in one swift, furious breath, turned her body from him with a jerk and left the room.

Lincoln set down Honoria carefully.

'You children go in and start your soup,' he said, and when they obeyed, he said to Charlie:

'Marion's not well and she can't stand shocks. That kind of people make her really physically sick.'

'I didn't tell them to come here. They wormed this address out of Paul at the bar. They deliberately ——'

'Well, it's too bad. It doesn't help matters. Excuse me a minute.'

Left alone, Charlie sat tense in his chair. In the next room he could hear the children eating, talking in monosyllables, already oblivious of the scene among their elders. He heard a murmur of conversation from a farther room and then the ticking bell of a phone picked up, and in a panic he moved to the other side of the room and out of earshot.

In a minute Lincoln came back. 'Look here, Charlie. I think we'd better call off dinner for to-night. Marion's in bad shape.'

'Is she angry with me?'

'Sort of,' he said, almost roughly. 'She's not strong and ——'

'You mean she's changed her mind about Honoria?'

'She's pretty bitter right now. I don't know. You phone me at the bank to-morrow.'

'I wish you'd explain to her I never dreamed these people would come here. I'm just as sore as you are.'

'I couldn't explain anything to her now.'

Charlie got up. He took his coat and hat and started down the corridor. Then he opened the door of the dining room and said in a strange voice, 'Good night, children.'

Honorita rose and ran around the table to hug him.

'Good night, sweetheart,' he said vaguely, and then trying to make his voice more tender, trying to conciliate something, 'Good night, dear children.'

V

Charlie went directly to the bar with the furious idea of finding Lorraine and Duncan, but they were not there, and he realized that in any case there was nothing he could do. He had not touched his drink at the Peters', and now he ordered a whisky and soda. Paul came over to say 'hello.'

'It's a great change,' he said sadly. 'We do about half the business we did. So many fellows I hear about back in the States lost everything, maybe not in the first crash, but then in the second, and now when everything keeps going down. Your friend George Hardt lost every cent, I hear. Are you back in the States?'

'No, I'm in business in Prague.'

'I heard that you lost a lot in the crash.'

'I did,' and he added grimly, 'but I lost everything I wanted in the boom.'

'Selling short.'

'Something like that.'

Again the memory of those days swept over him like a nightmare — the people they had met travelling; then people who couldn't add a row of figures or speak a coherent sentence. The little man Helen had consented to dance with at the ship's party, who had insulted her ten feet from the table; the human mosaic of pearls who sat behind them at the Russian ballet and, when the curtain rose on a scene, remarked to her companion: 'Luffy; just luffy. Zomebody ought to baint a bicture of it.' Men who locked their wives out in the snow, because the snow

of twenty-nine wasn't real snow. If you didn't want it to be snow, you just paid some money.

He went to the phone and called the Peters' apartment; Lincoln himself answered.

'I called up because, as you can imagine, this thing is on my mind. Has Marion said anything definite?'

'Marion's sick,' Lincoln answered shortly. 'I know this thing isn't altogether your fault, but I can't have her go to pieces about this. I'm afraid we'll have to let it slide for six months; I can't take the chance of working her up to this state again.'

'I see.'

'I'm sorry, Charlie.'

He went back to his table. His whisky glass was empty, but he shook his head when Alix looked at it questioningly. There wasn't much he could do now except send Honoria some things; he would send her a lot of things to-morrow. He thought rather angrily that that was just money — he had given so many people money.

'No, no more,' he said to another waiter. 'What do I owe you?'

He would come back some day; they couldn't make him pay for ever. But he wanted his child, and nothing was much good now, beside that fact. He wasn't young any more, with a lot of nice thoughts and dreams to have by himself. He was absolutely sure Helen wouldn't have wanted him to be so alone.

One With Shakespeare

BY MARTHA FOLEY

(From *Story*)

YES, Miss Cox was there, sitting at her desk in the almost empty classroom. Elizabeth took in the theme she had written to make up for a class missed because of illness.

A description of people under changing circumstances was the assignment.

Elizabeth had chosen immigrants arriving at a Boston dock. She had got quite excited as she wrote about the black-eyed women and their red and blue dresses, the swarthy men and their ear-rings, and the brightness of a far-away Mediterranean land slipping off a rocking boat to be lost in the greyness of Boston streets.

Elizabeth had liked writing this theme better than anything she had done since the description of a sunset. Amethyst and rose with a silver ribbon of river. Elizabeth shivered. A silver ribbon — that was lovely. And so was 'scarlet kerchief in the night of her hair' in this theme. Words were so beautiful.

Miss Cox read the new theme, a red pencil poised in her authoritative fingers. Miss Cox was so strong. She was strongest of all the teachers in the school. Stronger even than the two men teachers, Mr. Carpenter of physics and Mr. Cattell of maths. A beautiful strongness. Thought of Miss Cox made Elizabeth feel as she did when two bright shiny words suddenly sprang together to make a beautiful, a perfect phrase.

Elizabeth was glad she had Miss Cox as an English teacher and not Miss Foster any more. Miss Foster had made the class last year count the number of times certain words occurred in *Poor Richard's Almanack* to be sure they read the book right through word for word. And the words were all so ugly. Like the picture of Benjamin Franklin. But Miss Cox made you feel

the words, as when she read from *The Tale of Two Cities* in the deep singing voice, 'this is a far, far better thing than I have ever done.' Poor Sydney Carton.

Miss Cox had finished the second page of the theme. She was looking up at Elizabeth, her small dark blue eyes lighting up her glasses.

'Let me give you a pointer, my dear.'

Elizabeth automatically looked toward the blackboard ledge at the chalky pointer until the words 'my dear' bit into her mind. My dear! Miss Cox had called her 'My dear.'

'You have a spark of the divine fire,' Miss Cox said. 'You should make writing your vocation.'

Elizabeth flamed. Miss Cox, 'my dear,' themes about immigrants, blackboards and desks whirled and fused in the divine fire.

Miss Cox marked 'A' in the red pencil at the top of the theme and Elizabeth said 'thank you' and went away.

Elizabeth went back to her desk in the IIIA classroom which was in charge of Miss Perry. Miss Perry was her Greek teacher as well as her room teacher. Somehow Miss Perry made Elizabeth hate Greek. Elizabeth liked to think of Greece. White and gold in a blue Ægean. I, Sappho. Wailing Trojan women. Aristotle and Plato and Socrates. Grace and brains, said her father, of the men. But that was outside of Greek class. To Miss Perry Greece was the aorist of *τιθημι* and Xenophon's march in the *Anabasis*. Elizabeth always said to herself as she came into the IIIA room, 'I hate Miss Perry, the aorist and Xenophon. Oh, how I hate them!'

But this morning Elizabeth only pitied Miss Perry. She had no spark of the divine fire, poor thing.

Greek was the first class this morning. Elizabeth didn't care. She should make writing her vocation. That was something Miss Perry could never do. If she were called on for the list of irregular verbs this morning she would like to tell Miss Perry that. It would explain why she hadn't studied her Greek home-lesson. Why should she be bothered with conjugations when

she had to describe blue and red men arriving on an alien shore?

'Now, Miss Morris, will you please give me the principal parts of the verb *to give*.'

That was *δίδωμι*. But what was the perfect tense? Divine fire, divine fire.

'If you don't know, you may sit down. But I warn you that unless you do your home-lessons better you are not going to pass this month.'

Divine fire, divine fire.

The second hour was study class. Under Miss Pratt with the ugly bulb of a nose, splotchy face and eternal smile. Miss Pratt taught something or another to the younger girls down in the sixth class. She always smiled at Elizabeth but Elizabeth seldom smiled back. Her smile never means anything, thought Elizabeth.

Elizabeth dumped her books down in her desk in Miss Pratt's room. She opened Virgil at the part she liked — where Æneas told Dido the story of his wandering while the stars waned and drooped in the sky. It was not her lesson. She had had that months ago. But she liked going back over it, just as she liked the beginning of the first book. Great bearded Æneas rang out in *arma virumque cano*. That was strong. She would write strong some day. Strong like Virgil, and fine like Swinburne:

'I will go back to the great sweet mother,
Mother and lover of men, the sea.'

Swinburne had divine fire. Keats. Shelley: 'Hail to thee, blithe spirit.' And Masefield whose autograph she had bought for five shillings, not to help the British but to have a bit of the man who wrote *The Widow in the Bye Street*.

Elizabeth looked out into the school courtyard. Fine green shoots. Yellow on the laburnum. Spring was here. Divine fire, divine fire.

'Miss Morris, haven't you any work to do?'

Miss Pratt smiling. Nasty, nasty smiling. Didn't she know whom she was talking to like that? A great writer. A girl who would be famous. Let her ask Miss Cox. Why, I have a spark

of the divine fire. I am one with Shakespeare and Keats, Thackeray and Brontë and all the other great writers.

Elizabeth plumped her head in her hands and stared at the Latin page. Opposite was an illustration of an old statue, supposed to be Dido. Further on was a pen-and-ink sketch of Dido mounting the funeral pyre. Further on was a sketch of Æneas nearing Rome. Further on was the vocabulary. Then the end of the book. Elizabeth turned, page by page. She could not study, and if she looked out the window at spring again Miss Pratt would be nasty.

'Please, Miss Pratt, may I go to the library?'

'Must you go to the library? What for?'

'I have a reference in my history lesson to look up in the encyclopædia.'

'Very well.'

The library was large and quiet — a whole floor above Miss Pratt and the study class. It was divided off into alcoves. History in one. Encyclopædias in another. Languages, sciences. Fiction and poetry were in the farthest end which opened out towards the Fenway. The Fenway with its river and wide sky where Elizabeth liked to walk alone.

Elizabeth had read all the fiction and all the poetry. All of Jane Austen and *The Sorrows of Werther* and lots of other books which had nothing to do with her classes. She was always afraid one of her teachers would come in some day during study class and ask her what she was reading that book for. But that had never happened. And the librarian never paid any attention to her.

Now she went into the fiction and poetry alcove and sat on a small shelf ladder. She looked out the window at the long line of poplars rimming the fens. What would she call them if she were writing about them? Black sentinels against the sky. Oh beautiful, oh beautiful! That was the divine fire.

There was ancient history with Miss Tudor, who had had the smallpox and it showed all over her face; and geometry with Mr. Cattell who had a grey beard and grey eyes and grey clothes

and grey manner. Elizabeth liked that—grey manner. That was what the Advanced English Composition called penetrating analysis of character. She would do lots of penetrating analysis when she wrote in earnest.

She would write novels, the greatest, most moving novels ever written, like *Jean-Christophe*, Elizabeth was deciding when the bell rang for the end of the history lesson. And in between the novels she would write fine medallions of short stories like Chekhov's, Elizabeth told herself when the bell rang for the end of the geometry lesson. And she would always write lovely poems in between the novels and the short stories, she was thinking when the bell rang for the end of the school day.

Elizabeth walked past Miss Cox's room on her way out of the building. She slowed down her steps as she came to the door. Miss Cox was putting away her things in the drawer of her desk. Elizabeth would dedicate her first book to Miss Cox. 'To Miss Eleanor G. Cox this book is gratefully dedicated by the author.'

Eileen and Ruth were waiting for Elizabeth at the entrance. Eileen was the cousin of a famous poet and her mother was an Anarchist. Elizabeth liked the thought of anyone being an Anarchist. It sounded so much more beautiful than being a Democrat or a Republican. And Ruth, who was a class ahead, had already had her poems printed in the *Transcript*. Four times. And one of the poems had been reprinted by William Stanley Braithwaite in his anthology. Oh, they were going to be great and famous, all three.

'Let's walk home and save our fares for fudge sundaes,' said Eileen.

'All right, only I am going to have pineapple,' said Ruth.

'I'll go with you but I won't have any sundaes,' Elizabeth said. 'I'm going to save my fares this week to buy Miss Cox flowers.'

'You have a crush on Miss Cox.'

'Perhaps I have and perhaps I haven't. Anyway she said something wonderful to me this morning. She said I had a spark of the divine fire and should make writing my vocation.'

'Oh, that is wonderful. She never told me that, not even after Mr. Braithwaite took one of my poems for his anthology.'

'This is the happiest day of my life. Even when I have written many books and proved Miss Cox's faith in me, I shall always look back to this day. I never expected to be so wonderfully happy.'

The three girls, arm in arm, walked through the Fenway.

'I tell you, let's not get sundaes. Since Elizabeth's saving her money, it isn't fair to go in and eat them right before her. Let's you, Ruth, and I buy some of those big frosted doughnuts and some bananas and eat them on the Charles River esplanade. Then Elizabeth can have some too.'

'All right, and we can watch the sun set.'

'Oh, but that's what isn't fair. To save my money and then eat up what you buy.'

'Next time you can give us something.'

Elizabeth loved the Charles River. It always hurt her to think that it was on a Charles River bridge that Longfellow should have made up 'I stood on the bridge at midnight.' Perhaps that wasn't so bad, but so many parodies of the poem had ridiculed the river. Once Elizabeth had written a 'Letter to a River' Elizabeth pretended she was away off somewhere like in New York, and was writing to the river to tell how much she missed its beauty. She had put so many lovely phrases in it, she thought, and she couldn't understand why the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* had sent it back to her. But great writers always had many rejections first. That Scottish writer in whose eyes Ruth said she saw his soul, had said in his lecture that to write greatly, one must first suffer greatly.

How she had suffered, thought Elizabeth. Her maths. and Greek teachers were so cruel to her. She who had a spark of divine fire to be treated as they treated her. Tears came to her eyes. And now, when she was tired, she was walking home instead of riding so she could buy Miss Cox flowers. Pink sweetheart roses. Little tight knots of flowers. That was suffering and sacrifice. But it was for love as well as for literature.

'I felt the rhythm of the universe last night,' Ruth was saying. 'I was sitting on the roof in the dark and I felt the night all around me.'

'That makes me think of "swiftly walk over the western wave, spirit of Night." But it always bothers me that the wave is to the east in Boston,' said Eileen. 'Otherwise I like that poem very much.'

'The rhythm of the universe? What do you mean?'

'Oh, you know. The way someone said the stars swing round in their courses. And that's why I never, never want to study astronomy. I want only to imagine the stars. That's so much more beautiful than any facts about them can ever be.'

'I don't agree with you at all. Why when you think that the light of the nearest star started coming to you three years ago and what you were doing then and how this minute some star is starting to send you light, that may not get to you until far away and old and —'

'Stop! Don't give me facts about the stars! You can have those facts about your stars, if you want. But leave me my stars to love as I please.'

'Oh, very well. There, now the sky is colouring. See that lovely clear green high up. Pretty soon the deep colours will come. My, these frosted doughnuts are good! Much better than any near where we live.'

'There's the first light on the other bank. Over near the Tech. building.'

That was what it was to have a spark of divine fire. Elizabeth's thoughts flowed on with the darkening river. She could put all this, the river and the sky colours and the lights into writing. People would feel the loveliness of the world as they had never felt it before. People would no longer walk with their heads bent to the street when there was a sunset to be seen. What have you done to her, masters of men, that her head should be bowed down thus, thus in the deepening twilight and golden angelus? Her father said Noyes wrote maudlin sing-song. It was jingly sometimes but she did like it. And too many heads were bowed down, you masters of men.

'Mother'll scold me if I stay any later,' said Eileen.

'And my mother said she wouldn't get me a new dress for the class party if I came home late again.'

'Yes, we must all be going. But isn't it nice to think when you wake up at home in bed at night that the river is out here, creeping on and on under the stars?'

'No wonder Miss Cox said you had divine fire. Let's put our banana peels in here. This is Spring Clean-up Week, you know.'

'Good night.'

'Good night.'

'Good night.'

Holding the thought of her own greatness close to her, Elizabeth went home. A sliver of moon curled in the sky. That is the moon Shelley, Shakespeare, Spenser and yes, 'way back, Chaucer looked at. And now I am looking at it.

'Mother, Miss Cox says I have a spark of divine fire. I am to be a great writer some day.'

'Isn't that nice? Did you remember not to wipe your pen-point on your petticoat to-day?'

'Oh, mother, you know that's not a question of remembering. I never do it when I'm thinking about it. But you didn't half listen to what Miss Cox said about me.'

'Indeed I did. She said you had a divine spark of fire. That means you'll get another A in English this month on your report card.'

'It means more than any old report card. It means my whole life. I'm to be a writer, a great writer.'

'But first you must finish school and college. And that means you have to do your mathematics better. Remember how angry your father was about that E in geometry last month.'

Elizabeth sighed. She went out on the back porch which looked across the city. Lights pricked the blackness. Like a necklace which had spilled over velvet. Oh, words were lovely.

The moon was still there, a more emphatic sliver now. 'Moon of Shelley and Keats and Shakespeare, and my moon,' said Elizabeth, and went in to dinner.

*The Flaming Chariot**

BY GUY GILPATRIC

(From *The Saturday Evening Post*)

IT was an afternoon of lowering skies and leaden seas on which the whitecaps gleamed with that unaccountable brightness which presages a storm. A wind that had swept across four hundred miles of Mediterranean since it took its leave of Africa was whisking away these whitecaps, turning them into spray, and then sullyng the spindrift with clouds of Tyne-coal soot which belched from the funnel of a singularly ugly tramp steamer. This vessel was the *Inchcliffe Castle*, and she was snouting her way northward past the Balearics toward Marseilles at a spanking clip of seven knots. Now it happened that this rate of speed, although considerable for her, and being, in fact, about twice as fast as a man can walk, was by no means satisfactory to Mr. Montgomery, the mate. Therefore he growled impatiently to himself, strode to the speaking tube and whistled the engine room.

'The bridge'll speak to the chief,' he said. . . . 'Oh, are you there, Mr. Glencannon? Well, I s'y, ain't there nothing you can do to choke another knot or so out of 'er? There's a chap out 'ere 'oos sculling past us in a punt.'

'Ah, noo!' replied a voice in which were combined the tin of the tube and the timbre of Aberdeen. 'What ye say, Muster Montgomery, is inaccurate on the vurra face o' it! In the feerst place, the poont is a type o' craft unknown in these waters, and the waters is too deep for it anyway. In the second place, I've got the old teapot deelevering her maxeemum and leaking steam at every pore. And in the theerd place, I'll thank ye to

* From *Scotch and Water*, by Guy Gilpatric. By permission of the publishers, Messrs. John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd.

leave the engines to me and mind yere ain domned business. Whereupon, with crushing finality, the tube snapped shut.

'There!' complained Mr. Montgomery to the quartermaster at the wheel. 'Bly'me if there ever was a man like 'im!' And returning to the starboard wing of the bridge, he trained his binoculars astern at a three-masted barkentine which, close hauled and with all sails set, was scudding along in swift pursuit.

'Why, I never seen anything like it!' he muttered, in awed and reluctant admiration. 'In another 'arf hour, that perishing old windjammer'll be showing us 'er 'eels! I'd better notify the Old Man.'

Shortly, he was joined by Captain Ball, who borrowed his glasses and scanned the barkentine with an expert eye. 'Well,' he said after a thorough inspection, 'he's certainly giving her all she'll take, but he'll jolly well yank her sticks out if he doesn't watch her!'

'Yes, and he'll jolly well pass us if we don't watch 'im!' said Mr. Montgomery. 'Umiliyting, I calls it, sir — being trimmed by a ruddy windjammer!'

'H'm,' mused Captain Ball. 'Sail beating steam. It is a narsty idea, at that! I'll just speak to Mr. Glencannon.' And he, too, stepped to the tube and had parlance with the choleric genius who presided below.

When he returned, his face was purple and his moustache was trembling. But soon the clank of furnace doors and the scrape of coal shovels came up through the skylights — these, and a voice raised in profane exhortation. Then the pulse of the engines throbbed swifter to the stimulus of steam, and the deck plates set up a new vibration as the *Inchcliffe Castle* protestingly increased her gait through the water.

'Ah-ha, now we're snorting!' said Captain Ball, glancing at his watch and peering through the glasses at the indicator of the patent log. 'I bet Mr. Glencannon'll get a good ten and a quarter out of her.'

Mr. Montgomery shook his head dubiously. 'I suppose 'e

could if anybody could, but just the syme, captain, I'm afryde that blinking syle boat will shyne us yet!

The crew, now, were watching the vessel astern. They stood in groups along the *Inchcliffe Castle's* well deck, marvelling at the other's speed, waxing sarcastic about their own ship and laying bets as to the time which would elapse before they took the windjammer's wake. For steadily, steadily, she was overhauling them.

Captain Ball beat his fist upon the bridge rail in helpless exasperation. 'Hell's bones!' he groaned. 'She's an old-time racing clipper, or the ghost of one, that's what she is! I was fifteen years in sail myself, and I tell you no ordinary tub can travel like that. No, nor no ordinary skipper, either!'

'I can't myke out 'er nyme; there's no 'ead-boards on 'er,' said Mr. Montgomery, addressing Captain Ball. 'My word, captain, look! Look what 'e's doing! 'E's planning to shyve us close!'

'Yes, so's he can give us the horse laugh when he goes by,' growled Captain Ball.

High aloft above the barkentine's deck, tiny figures clambered out along the foreyards, while below, groups were hauling in on the main and mizzen sheets until the great sails stretched taut as drumheads. Heeled over until her lee rails hissed whitely through the water, she charged along like a massive pile of gale-driven thunderclouds. Her sails were dirty and frayed and patched; her black hull was streaked and lumpy as the outside of a leaky tar barrel and yet, despite it all, she was regal, majestic, beautiful. As she swept alongside the *Inchcliffe Castle*, the roar of water past her bows and the drone of wind through her towering pyramid of hemp and canvas made a hymn to honour the passing of a queen.

'By George, what a sight!' exclaimed Captain Ball. 'I say, just ask Mr. Glencannon to step up here. He might as well share our shame.'

By the time Mr. Glencannon, in overalls and carpet slippers, had arrived upon the bridge, the two ships were neck and neck.

'Foosh!' he said disgustedly, wiping the perspiration from his chin. 'So yon's the cause o' all the uproar! Weel, I've seen sailboats monny's the time before ——'

'Yuss, and I s'pose you've orften 'ad 'em syle rings 'around you too,' sneered Mr. Montgomery.

'No, I never ha',' replied Mr. Glencannon with unshaken calm. 'And for the vurra gude reason that all the vessels I've sairved on in the past had speed enough to get oot o' their own way. But as long as ye've seen fit to get pairsonal, Muster Montgomery, I'll just remind ye that ——'

He was interrupted by a shout. Down on the *Inchcliffe Castle's* well deck, the men were pointing excitedly toward the barkentine.

'Look, look yon!' exclaimed Mr. Glencannon, following their gaze. 'Why, domned if I ever beheld such a spectacle!'

The vessel's decks and rigging were peopled with characters who might have stepped from the pages of the Old Testament. Every man aboard her was clothed completely in black and had hair that swept his shoulders and a flowing beard!

'Lunateeks oot for a peekneek!' pronounced Mr. Glencannon, breaking the awed silence.

'Lunatics and no mistake, but they're great sailors all the same!' grunted Captain Ball. 'That's the skipper — the big brute there on the quarter-deck. I say, give the old shellback a hail, Mister Mate.'

'Barkentine a-hoy-y-y!' called Mr. Montgomery. 'Wot's yer nyme?'

'What the hell is it to you?' bellowed a voice from between the cupped hands of the bearded skipper, and its accent was distinctly American.

'Haw!' chuckled Mr. Glencannon delightedly. 'There's yere answer, Muster Mate! Yon is a master o' repartee and a mon after my ain heart!' And reaching for the whistle cord, he applauded the patriarch with three hoarse blasts of the *Inchcliffe Castle's* siren. Then, as the poop of the barquentine slid past the *Castle's* bridge, he removed his cap and waved it politely — a

salute which the bearded one acknowledged by thumbing his nose.

Mr. Glencannon, outraged by this gratuitous discourtesy, leaned over the rail and shook his fist. 'Why, ye whuskery Yankee goat!' he shouted. 'Get oot o' our way or we'll run ye doon!'

'In a hawg's eye you will!' scoffed the bearded one, turning on his heel to glance into the binnacle. 'Well, so long, you limping lime-juicers! I'll tell 'em you're coming in Marseels!' He paused just long enough to thumb his nose once more — this time over his left shoulder, and with something of a flourish.

The wind was freshening, and in response to a gust the barkentine lay over and surged triumphantly ahead.

'Well,' sighed Captain Ball mournfully, as her transom hove into view, 'that's that! What's her name anyway?'

'*Flaming Chariot*,' read Mr. Glencannon, squinting his eyes. '*Flaming Chariot*, o' Savannah, Georgia.'

II

With much coughing and churning, two little French tugs butted the *Inchcliffe Castle* between the granite walls of the Bassin de la Joliette. She ran out her lines and made fast to the wharf. Mr. Montgomery, his labours ended, waved to the bridge from the fo'c'sle head and pointed to a stately three-master berthed in the opposite side of the dock.

'Well, damme if it isn't the *Flaming Chariot*!' exclaimed Captain Ball.

The Marseilles harbour pilot, hearing him, nodded, and placing his forefinger against his temple, agitated it as though scrambling eggs. '*Fous — ils sont fous — all crez-zee*,' he declared, indicating the barkentine. 'Crez-zee Americains!'

'Yes, I fancy they are a bit cracked,' agreed Captain Ball, observing that those members of the *Flaming Chariot's* crew who were not engaged in labour were wearing long black robes and smoking corncob pipes. 'Who are those chaps, anyway?'

'Crez-zee Americains,' repeated the pilot, in full and final explanation.

For the next few days the gentlemen of the *Inchcliffe Castle* were too busy to bother about their hirsute neighbours. But one afternoon, when the cargo had been discharged and they were awaiting orders from the agent, Captain Ball yawned, stretched and said something about paying the barkentine a visit.

'Me visit them impudent coves? Well, orl right if you s'y so, sir,' agreed Mr. Montgomery reluctantly. 'But suppose we tyke Mr. Glencannon along. Arfter orl, it's 'im we 'ave to thank for our disgyce.'

'I'll deem mysel' honoured to accompany ye, captain,' said Mr. Glencannon. 'I'd like to mak' an inspection aboard yon Yankee zoo. The boorish behaviour o' that whuskery skeeper still rankles beetterly.'

They strolled down the pier and entered the gate at the opposite side. Over their heads soared the mighty jib-boom of the *Flaming Chariot* — a spar which juttet from her bow out over the traffic to the very centre of the Rue Sainte-Pauline.

'An old clipper hull — of course, I knew she was a clipper!' declared Captain Ball. 'Look at the taper of her; why, she's built like a wedge!'

'Vurra curious,' conceded Mr. Glencannon somewhat absently, as he abhorred all sailing ships, and this one in particular. 'But whoosh, captain, do ye look at the rust and feelth o' her. 'Tis a wonder the old tub stays afloat!'

'You bet it's a wonder! Why, do you realize, gentlemen, that this craft must be at least sixty years old? Before they rigged her as a barkentine, I wouldn't doubt if she'd done seven-teen knots or better.'

'Only fawncy!' remarked Mr. Montgomery, casting a sour glance at Mr. Glencannon. 'Seventeen knots and not a hengineer aboard 'er! Bly'me, look!' And he lowered his voice. 'Look there, captain! The silly blighters are wearing sandals!'

With their flowing black robes tucked under them, a number of the crew were sitting in the shade of the deck-house, rolling dice. Two or three of them were smoking, and from the condition of the adjacent scupper, it was apparent that the remainder

chewed tobacco. They looked, talked and behaved like a conclave of renegade saints.

Aft, beneath the awning, the skipper was engaged in darning a pair of red flannel drawers. Beside his deck chair stood a two-gallon jug and a tin cup, to which he referred frequently and with gusto. It was during such an interval that he spied the delegation from the *Inchcliffe Castle*.

'Well, damned if it ain't the limping lime-juicers!' he roared.

Howdy, brethern — howdy! Come aboard and rest your hats!

'A-weel,' murmured Mr. Glencannon. 'He seems a bit more ceevil, but I dinna trust him. There's the ladder to yere left, captain. . . . After you, sir.'

They were welcomed on the deck by the bearded skipper, who towered at least six feet seven in his sandalled feet and was broad and resonant in proportion.

'I'm glad you-all dropped in, brothers!' he boomed. 'We're clearing with a cargo for Barcelona to-morrer night. Jest unjoint yourselves under this here awning while I go to my room and break out a fresh jug. Sho, it's the slickest home-made cawn you ever tasted! I can't abide these namby-pamby Dago liquors, can you?'

Shortly he reappeared with a jug and three tin cups. 'Aft, the mates!' he shouted; and then, uncorking the jug: 'The mates is my sons,' he explained. 'I'd like for you all to shake hands with 'em.'

They were joined by three hairy, bearded huskies who stood fumbling with their robes and digging shyly at the deck caulking with their horny bare toes.

'Gents,' said the skipper, 'these here's my sons — Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. . . . Tell the comp'ny howdy, boys. . . . You, Meshach, take your fingers out of your noses!'

'Do ye look at yon Meshach,' whispered Mr. Glencannon, plucking at Mr. Montgomery's sleeve. 'I saw him this morning, wiping up the dock wi' five French stevedores.'

'Yes,' the skipper was saying, as the trio shuffled away, 'they're three good boys and three good mates. And now I'll interduce

myself. I'm Ezekiel the Prophet.' Quite oblivious of the startled expressions of his visitors, he shook hands all round.

'I spose I ought to ax pardon for the way I acted t'other day,' mused the Prophet, as he tilted the jug over the crook of his mighty arm. 'I'm always kind of short-tempered when I'm at sea. And then, besides, we'd lost the Prophetess only the night before.'

'Oh, noo, let me understand ye, sir,' said Mr. Glencannon with ready sympathy. 'Do ye mean to say that Mrs. Ezekiel is — er — dead?'

'Yop, you got the idea,' nodded the skipper airily. 'During the night, ma heard the Call, so she clumb up to the crosstrees and jumped overboard. It was a mighty slick passing, I'm here to stater!'

'Weel, weel, weel, I never!' breathed Mr. Glencannon in amazement.

'Why, sure you never!' beamed the Prophet. 'I reckon it all sounds strange to you, brethren, because you don't understand our religion. Well, it's a danged good religion. I'm the boss of it, back in Savannah. I wrote it all myself.' And helping himself to a sizable snifter of corn whisky, he raised his cup, bowed politely and tossed it off,

'Dawg-gone!' he exclaimed. 'That there's the stuff for your bunions! How does it set with you, gents?'

'It's vurra deeleecious,' said Mr. Glencannon. 'It tastes a wee bit like petroleum, only sweeter. . . . But aboot yere releegion, sir, ye interest me. I'm a member o' the kirk in gude standing, and a bit o' a theologian mysel', so I wonder wad ye just briefly expound yere doctrines for my benefee?'

'Well, they're pretty complicated,' said the Prophet guardedly. 'Besides, we don't want no Scotchman in our religion, anyway.'

'Oh!' said Mr. Glencannon, gagging as the corn whisky reached his tonsils, and therefore failing to feel the kick which Mr. Montgomery landed on the bulge beneath his deck chair. By the time he had finished his drink and refilled his cup, the Prophet was telling Captain Ball about the ship.

'Why, sho, she's one of the oldest and fastest ships afloat!' he declared. 'She was a clipper, built to run the blockade out of Charleston during the war, and ——'

'The war? Well, that ain't so long ago,' chimed in Mr. Montgomery.

'Aye,' agreed Mr. Glencannon, taking his nose out of his cup and feeling to see if his moustache was on fire. 'I reecall the war as though it were yusterday!'

'From 1863 to now ain't long? And you, Mr. Scotty — you say you can remember it? Oh, why, hell, boys, it's the Civil War I'm talking about — the American War of the Rebellion, not the German War.'

'Oh,' said Mr. Montgomery. 'A bit of a family brawl, so to s'y. Well, I 'adn't never 'eard of it.'

'No, you wouldn't of, you being a limejuicer,' said the Prophet, deep pity in his voice. 'But I'll tell the world it must 'a' been some war jest the same! Why, if you look sharp along them bulwarks and deck-houses, you can still find canister shot and minnie balls under the paint and pry 'em out with your knife. Yes, sir' — and his eyes twinkled strangely — 'we've found some mighty funny things aboard this here old ship!'

Mr. Glencannon, engaged in further experimentation with the liquor, had heard comparatively little of this discourse. At about this time, as a matter of fact, he was surprised to find himself floating in a silvery fog through which voices filtered strangely. He peered curiously at the distance-dimmed faces to see if this sudden separation of his astral and physical selves was occasioning comment, but observing that the company was too busy having another drink to bother about such minor psychic phenomena, he banished his fears and joined them. It was really very pleasant, albeit a trifle confusing.

Once he was conscious of singing 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled' through all its several verses. Again, he realized that a whiskery giant was weeping upon his shoulder and that the whiskers tickled his ear.

There was a lapse of time, and then, magically, the scene

shifted. He was seated at a table around which were Captain Ball, Mr. Montgomery, and four men with long beards.

A negro, similarly bearded, but wearing a gingham apron over his black robe, was serving fried chicken smothered in a creamy white sauce, and pouring a colourless liquid out of a jug. The chicken was delicious. The liquid tasted something like petroleum, only sweeter.

'Yea, verily!' boomed a thundering challenge out of nowhere. 'We Americans can outsail, outfight, outdrink and outspit any other nation on the face of this earth!'

'Amen!' came a basso response from three black figures seated in a row. 'Amen and hallelujah!'

'A hoonderd poonds ye're wrong!' cried somebody, springing to his feet. 'Though ye trimmed us at sea, ye domned Yankee, I'll bet ye five hoonderd o' yere ain dollars that ye canna do it again, and you to arrange the details!'

Mr. Glencannon was about to applaud these stalwart sentiments, but then, too late, he realized that the voice was his own, and that, instead of springing to his feet, he had merely fallen into the mashed turnips.

III

Mr. Glencannon was awakened by someone shaking him violently, and he opened his eyes to find himself in his room aboard the *Inchcliffe Castle*.

'Come, wyke up!' said a voice which he recognized as that of the mate. 'Wyke up! You 'aven't any time to wyste, you 'aven't!'

With difficulty managing to disengage his tongue from the roof of his mouth, 'Any time to waste for what?' he inquired thickly. 'What is the necessity for a' the roosh and boostle?'

'Why to get ready for the ryce—the life-boat ryce you challenged the Prophet to larst night!'

'Life-boat race? Why, mon, ye're daft! Whatever are ye talking aboot?' Mr. Glencannon sat bolt upright and then abruptly lay down again.

'Well, it's you who's daft, if you arks me,' shrugged Mr. Montgomery. 'Nobbut a cryzy man would 'ave challenged them gryte 'airy apyes to a rowing ryce and bet a 'undred pounds on it, like you did!'

'A hoonderd poonds?' repeated Mr. Glencannon weakly. 'Ah, noo, noo, Muster Montgomery, let's get this straight. I dinna reecall a word of it!'

It appeared, from the mate's explanation, that the race would be rowed over a course from the basin entrance to the Anse des Catalans light-buoy and back; that Mr. Glencannon and the Prophet Ezekiel would act as coxswains of the respective crews; that the craft used would be two identical lifeboats furnished by the *Inchcliffe Castle*; and that the race would start promptly at two P.M.

'Yuss, and you agreed to it yourself larst night,' insisted Mr. Montgomery. 'Orl 'ands of both ships 'as been betting on it since morning. It's 'arf arfter twelve now, so you'd jolly well better be picking your crew and getting ready, you 'ad!'

'Whoosh!' said Mr. Glencannon, rising with a Spartan effort. "'Tis vurra plain that with a hoonderd poonds at stake I must summon a' my keenest faculties.' And reaching under his bunk, he dragged forth a bottle of Duggan's Dew of Kirkintilloch, filled a tumbler to the brim and drank it without a flicker of an eyelash.

'There!' he said, smacking his lips. 'I shall noo pull on my troosies and set my intellect to work. Meanwhile'—and he bowed his head and gnawed thoughtfully at his moustache—'meanwhile, Muster Montgomery, I'll thank ye to order Number 1 lifeboat lowered into the water richt away, and to have Number 3 let doon so's it's exactly opposite the loading door on the poort side. Stand by till I give ye the word to lower it the rest o' the way.'

'Right-o!' said Mr. Montgomery, stepping briskly out on deck and blowing his whistle. Then, having given his orders, 'Strike me if I don't believe 'e's sunk this time!' he chuckled. 'Even that Scotch 'ighw'yman can't swindle his w'y past a boat-load of ruddy seven-foot 'Erculeses!'

But later that afternoon, as he stood with the cheering crowd upon the pier head, he changed his mind — yes, and cursed himself for having bet his money on the *Flaming Chariot's* crew. Even though the racing craft were still beyond the Vieux Port, it was evident that the *Castle's* was well in the lead. Through his glasses, Mr. Montgomery could see that the men were pulling along swiftly, easily, and that Mr. Glencannon, standing in the stern sheets with the tiller between his knees, was fortifying his strength with copious draughts from a quart bottle. Several similar bottles, he observed, were in circulation among the oarsmen.

As the boats approached the finish line, the bearded giants were jaded, weary and sore beset. The Prophet Ezekiel, garbed in his flowing robes, raised voice and arms in futile effort to goad them on.

'Row, row, ye shuddering sinners!' he stormed. 'You, Shadrach, fer the love o' tunket put some beef into it! Hep! Stroke! Hep! . . . Wake up, Zeruiah, wake up, gol dang it, before I take this here tiller and flail the livin' wamus off'n yel'

But his eloquence was of no avail. Leisurely the *Inchcliffe Castle's* boat crossed the line a dozen lengths in the lead.

As it did so, Mr. Glencannon turned, struck an attitude, and with a sweeping gesture thumbed his nose at his vanquished rivals. Then, reacting to the strain of it all, he took a final swig from his bottle and collapsed into the boat.

'Well, I never seen the like, sir!' said the crestfallen Mr. Montgomery. 'Ow in the world 'e ever myde that crew o' Liverpool rifferaff row like so many Hoxford and C'ymbridge hexperts is a fair miracle to me!'

'Yes,' chuckled Captain Ball knowingly, 'but you never want to forget, Mister Mate, that when it comes to miracles, Mr. Glencannon's a pretty handy chap to have about.'

'But 'ow did 'e do it, that's orl I asks — 'ow did 'e do it?'

'Huh!' Captain Ball snorted. 'Why, when you was up there standing by for his word to lower Number 3 into the water, what do you s'pose he was doing through that loading door — fishing for bloaters?'

'I 'aven't the fyntest notion wot 'e was doing,' sulked Mr. Montgomery.

'Well,' whispered Captain Ball, glancing cautiously about him, 'he wæs lashing a big steel ash bucket to Number 3's keel — that's what he was doing! Why, it was a regular sea anchor! It set up a drag in the water under that boat like towing a busted bass drum!'

'Lawks!' gasped Mr. Montgomery. 'An arsh bucket! W'y, a team o' blooming lorry 'orses couldn't myke any speed dragging that!'

'No, nor neither could them whiskery psalm-singers,' agreed Captain Ball. 'Maybe it'll learn 'em some sea manners!'

'It's learned me my lesson about Mr. Glencannon; anyw'y,' said Mr. Montgomery ruefully. 'Arfter I've forked out for my bets, I'll go below and 'ide my 'ead in shyme until the ruddy *Flying Chariot* puts to sea. And I 'opes they sinks on their w'y to Barcelona!'

Next morning bright and early, Mr. Glencannon strolled along the Quai du Port and turned into the sunshine which flooded the broad Rue Cannebière. There was a smile on his face and a song in his heart, for in the wallet directly over it reposed a portly packet of American bank notes.

'Weel,' he chuckled, 'it a' goes to prove ye dinna need whuskers to be sagacious! And it also proves that it's a costly pastime to gae aboot insulting decent people on the high sea. And noo I shall mak' arrangements for sending my winnings hame to Scotland.'

Turning into the banking offices of the Crédit Marseillaise, he made known his wishes and presented his notes at the grilled window.

The cashier moistened his thumb on a sponge and prepared to count the neat stack of tens and twenties. Suddenly he paused, frowned, looked up.

'Monsieur,' he announced coldly, 'this money is not good!'

'Not good?' repeated Mr. Glencannon, grasping the marble ledge for support. 'Ah, noo, mounseer, this is no occasion for

humour! I'll thank ye to cease yere leevity and do as ye're 'bid.'

'It is not an affair of the drollery,' insisted the cashier. 'Have the goodness to regard, monsieur — why, one can easily see for one's self!' He pushed the bills back to Mr. Glencannon. 'Read, monsieur — read there carefully what is printed.'

With trembling fingers, Mr. Glencannon picked up a bill and examined it. Across the top, in large letters, was engraved 'CITIZENS' BANK OF ATLANTA, GEORGIA,' and then, smaller, on the line below, 'CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA.'

'Weel, I'll be domned,' he murmured weakly. 'That old Yankee swundler!'

Then into his mind came a vague and tantalizing half memory, obscured by a strange silvery fog. He tried to summon the rest of it, but it eluded him. He shook his head sadly.

'It's a' vurra peerplexing,' he sighed. 'Vurra peerplexing indeed. But, yes, I do seem to recall somebody, somewhere, saying something aboot an American Ceevil War. A-weel' — and he stuffed the bank notes into his pocket and turned toward the door — 'I fancy there's nowt to do but gae oot and find a pub where they haven't heard the war news.'

Fiddlers of Moon Mountain

BY EMMETT GOWEN

(From *The Pictorial Review*)

IT was nigh on to bedtime in the Shannon cabin. Beulah was busy turning back the quilts on the two beds. Fate was teaching young Watt to play the fiddle.

Watt was only ten, but already he was mighty smart with the bow. He could play hymns and a few of the hoedown tunes that had made his father famous among the mountaineers. But Watt knew that his father could teach him more important music than mere tune scraping, and he was eager to share those deeper talents.

'Pappy, learn me to play that piece you play for ma,' he said.

For a thoughtful moment Fate gave no reply. He took the fiddle and laid it across his knees. In the fireplace a pine knot was blazing with leaping brilliance and the light gleamed on the worn and scarred sides of the instrument. The light gleamed also in the rich and shining blackness of Fate's hair, in his deep-set brown eyes, on even, white teeth when a smile pulled at the corners of his mouth until his lips came apart.

'Son, I allow you're getting too big for your britches,' Fate finally replied. Then to his wife he said, 'Beulah, you hear what your young one wants?'

Mrs. Shannon looked up from her task of preparing the beds. Her face showed rosy red and lovely in the firelight; her body was dark with the shadows that stretched across the floor and climbed up to where her hair hung in a braid across her shoulder. Her eyes met her husband's over Watt's head.

The glance was full of a sort of love of which young Watt was plumb ignorant: it told, somehow, that their son's request had trespassed on that love. Mrs. Shannon blushed a little, smiled a little, and then went expressionless on account of Watt's looking

at her in wonderment over what it was between his ma and his pappy that he did not know about.

'Son,' she said, 'ain't it about time you went to bed?'

Watt's cherub cheeks swelled with manly resentment. 'Not yet, Ma!' he said in tones that carried both an offended protest and a plea. 'Pappy's learning me to play the fiddle. I want to get the hang of that piece he fiddles for you.'

'You can't do it,' Fate told him. 'That piece I play for your ma ain't got airy a tune, 'n' I can't teach you to play any way but the way the tunes go. It ain't got a tune and it's something a'budy feels that makes music like that. Second place, it ain't fitten for a young one to fiddle. You're too little a tad to have them kind of feelings.'

Young Watt was impressed mightily. He fidgeted in the hickory-bottom chair and began swinging his legs. When he spoke there were awe and reverence in his voice.

'When I'm growed up, will you teach me, Pappy?'

'I allow you'll learn yourself afore you have more'n half a dozen whiskers on your chin,' Fate said with a deep-throated laugh.

'I shore want to,' Watt declared. 'It must be powerful good music, causen it always makes ma happy. 'N' sometimes,' he added, 'it makes her cry, but it ain't the kind of crying a'budy does when they get a hiding.'

'Shet yore mouth!' his mother said suddenly. She bit her lips to kill the smile that tried to creep out on them.

Obediently, Watt changed the subject. 'Pappy, I can play "The Ripples,"' he said. 'Want me to show ye?'

He took the fiddle from his father's lap. Fate watched him, amused but doubtful, as he began jerking his fingers on the strings while he pulled the bow across them. There was in the sound something that was liquid and clear, like a mountain stream rippling over rocks. For a while Fate listened critically, then he exclaimed:

'Well, I declare, Beulah, yore young one knows how to play "The Ripples"!'

Mrs. Shannon nodded. She had heard him practising for this moment for many an hour. She had been thankful that the fiddle kept him out of mischief, while she heard him struggle time on end to master the subtle succession of sounds that suggested running water.

*

Fate was immensely pleased with his young one. He took him on his knee and showed him more about the ripples, how you fingered to get the quick-running sound, the way the bow should be rubbed to imitate the swishing of swift water. So pleased was Fate that the teaching went on, while the old clock on the mantel tick-tocked until its bent hands pointed to an hour far past Watt's bedtime.

Watt was happy. He wanted to be able to play not only the simple tunes that many a man could play, but also the special music that he heard from nobody but his father. His father's music was mysterious and marvellous, proof to him of greatness.

True it was that Fate Shannon fiddled as no other man of the mountain country had ever been known to fiddle. He knew nothing of music written by great composers, yet when he wept and laughed and worshipped with the bow on the strings, he created moods as powerfully as famous violinists in vast auditoriums.

Once he had caught his own survigorous emotion in the tones, he was able to modify and elaborate until he had created, in his own mind, a composition that would strike deep into the heart of any sensitive-eared listener. He had been heard to play things that were as wild and free and pagan as anything Pan might have contrived on his reeds at mornglom.

But Fate scarcely recognized his talent as such. Fact is, he was shy about it, and ashamed to play for others anything but the usual scraping tunes.

*

On account of the strangeness of the music, and Fate's secretiveness about it, the mountaineers roundabout developed a suspicion of him. Late passers on the path that ran along the

side of Moon Mountain past Fate's house had heard strange things. Possum-hunters had listened with superstitious awe to Fate's musical effects, so powerful was he with the bow, and the unknown language he spoke with it.

Some folks had overheard a pert little melody, played for Watt when he was a baby. The fiddle was full of play and laughter, and it fair reminded a hearer of little tads. Womenfolk said that to hear would come nigh to making them want to have a baby. Other times the sounds would come low-toned and wearily sad, as if Fate were praying to the Lord A'mighty.

It was as if he fiddled a prayer for his sins, and maybe for the sins of the rest of the world, too—the music was that sorrowful. Preacher Giles used to say that a man that could fiddle like that must be favoured by the Lord, but others thought differently.

The composition about which young Watt was curious had been created for Fate's wife's ears alone. Fate would fiddle to tell Beulah that he loved her mighty well. The tones would start low, crooning and gentle, soft as moonlight on a woman's hair; then, gradually, they would become hot and full of passion until they culminated in a strange and wild crescendo.

While Fate played, Beulah would get excited and her face would reflect the sweet pain inside her. Fate would finish and put the fiddle down, and Beulah would get in his arms, while she would cling tightly to him as though she had no strength and needed his. Folks say he won her, years back, by his fiddle magic.

Tip Leak was courting her and getting ready to marry her. Her pappy, old Ira Pope, was encouraging her with Tip and chasing Fate away. Ira wanted her to marry well, and Tip was in a fair way to being a rich man, for he owned the sawmill and the cotton gin at Briar Ridge.

In those days Fate was just a down-gone losel, like his father and his grandfather before him, and folks said he only worked enough to get money for chewing plug and a bottle of white-corn whisky for Saturday nights. He fiddled at all the dances and never was seen to go nigh the church at Four Corners.

On the other hand, Tip quit going to dances and joined the church when he started courting Beulah. That got him mighty well favoured in old Ira Pope's eyes, because the old man, now that his legs were no longer nimble and his weakly stomach never gave him a call to take a pull at a bottle, thought dancing was a terrible sin in the eyes of the Lord.

But Fate was nearer to Beulah's own age, and nights when she set her shoes carefully on the floor and sang a little song before going to bed:

'Wishing my true love to see,
I put my shoes in the shape of a T—'

she was thinking of Fate instead of Tip, although there was none to know what was going on in her mind.

Fate would meet her down by the creek and play 'The Ripples' for her. When he worked out the love tune, she fair began to hate Tip. Finally, when it came time for her to marry her father's choice, she told Fate about it.

Fate got her to run away with him. They were walking over the mountain to Briar Gap to get married, when Tip got wind of what was happening.

Well, Tip was all cut up about it. He got on a horse and galloped over to old Ira's cabin and told him that Fate was running off with Beulah. Old Ira did not say anything at first. He went back in the cabin, and when he came out he was carrying his double-barrelled shot-gun, which was loaded with buckshot. He handed the gun up to Tip, who was sitting on his horse, with his long legs dangling down almost to the horse's work-bent knees.

'Take this and go git 'em,' Ira said. 'Just take care that none of them buckshots hits my gal. Better not shoot him till you git close on him.'

Then Tip went galloping along the mountain path after Fate and Beulah. When he caught up with them he rode up with the shot-gun's hammers pulled back.

Beulah was frightened, and she stood close to Fate, holding

on to the sleeve of his old blue shirt. Tip rode up close, knowing that Fate was unarmed, and said:

'Git away from Beulah, Fate! I'm agoing to kill you!'

Fate looked at Tip, and his lips twisted into a queer smile, and contempt was in his eyes.

He made out to step away from Beulah, and he made one flashing leap at Tip on the horse. He grabbed him, and the shot-gun went off in the air. The horse jumped out from under Tip, but Fate held him still off the ground while he took the gun away from him like you take a dangerous toy away from a child.

Tip was six feet two and, if he was skinny, he was strong, but Fate handled him like a sack of flour. Fate was mighty much a man. His legs were slim, likewise his hips, but his chest broadened out from his waist like a fan, and his arms had muscles like a blacksmith's. Fate lifted Tip above his head like a bundle of tops and walked toward the creek, while Tip's arms and legs waved wildly in the air.

He hurled Tip in the creek. Tip hit the water with a big splash and went under. When he came up, spluttering, Fate was breaking the shot-gun and taking the cartridges out. He threw them at Tip, who was wading as fast as he could toward the opposite bank.

Fate laughed, a dangerous, wicked laugh, and caught Beulah by the arm. They walked on toward Briar Ridge without once turning around to look back.

And that was how Tip and Fate came to be bitter enemies. Tip swore to get even with Fate, and at first he said he was going to kill him. For a long time he carried his rifle everywhere he went. Folks were real interested in what was going to happen when he met Fate. Some said it was a powerful lot of bluff, because on the days that Fate was up on Moon Mountain, Tip would be at Briar Ridge bragging about what he was going to do, and on the days that Fate would be in Briar Ridge, Tip would not be there.

They had to meet, though. It happened one day when Fate was sitting on the porch of the post office and Tip came driving up in his Ford. Tip got out of the automobile before he saw Fate. Gin he spied him, sitting there whittling on a stick, he reached back in the seat and got his rifle.

Fate threw away the stick he was whittling, wiped his knife blade on the side of his brogan shoe, and closed it. He stood up, with his legs wide apart and his chest arched out.

'Tip!' he said in a voice that rang out like a fog horn, just as Tip was turning toward him with the rifle. 'Tip,' he said, 'put that there gun back in yore automobile while I tell you something.'

Tip held the rifle in one hand and stood stock-still.

'Like h—— I'll put it back,' he said. 'I'm bound to kill you, Fate, for the way you done me that time you ran off with ——'

'Shet up!' Fate roared, lowering his head like a bull getting ready to charge. 'Don't you dare benasty her name by bringing it into this.'

Tip had his rifle cocked, and his right arm holding it jerked slightly, as though he were going to shoot Fate any minute.

'I don't aim to speak your wife's name,' Tip said nervously. 'But what was that you wanted to tell me afore I shoot you?'

Everybody looked at Fate, to see what he had to say. They had all walked to one side, to be out of the way of the bullet. There were Bill Overhall and Tom Briley and Tom Briley's oldest boy and Jed Perkins, who ran the post office, and four fellows from up Flatrock way. They all stood aside and waited in a fidget to see what was going to happen. Fate didn't say anything for a minute. A chicken looking for pickings in the dust of the road walked between the two men, but they did not see the fowl on account of staring hard into each other's eyes. They were standing about twenty feet apart.

'Things ain't like they used to be, Tip,' Fate said. 'If you kill a man these days they arrest you. Course, if I had a gun, whichever one of us killed t'other could git acquitted on account

of it being self-defence. That's why I ain't totin' no gun, Tip. Efen I was totin' one I couldn't kill you.

"The Good Book says "Thou shalt not kill," and I've sinned enough in the eyes of the Lord without having to account for killing you. And I don't aim for you to kill me, Tip, without you go to the pen for it. Efen you shoot me dead, I reckon these other folks here will tell as how you didn't do it in self-defence."

Well, Tip did not have a thing to say to that. He just stood there, with his rifle loose in his hand, while the pullet scratched in the road at his feet and kicked up dirt on his pants leg.

It was time for one or the other of them to make a move, and both of them stood stock-still, looking into each other's eyes. They stood staring — a minute, five minutes, ten minutes — neither one of them moving a muscle, while the chicken kept scratching in the dirt and the onlookers shifted about silently, taking care not to get in range of the rifle.

It looked as if they would stand there until Judgment Day, but finally Sheriff Hunter rode up on his bay mare and saw what was going on. It took a mighty lot of nerve to do what he did, but he rode the mare in between them and told them both to get home. Fate picked up his sack of flour and started out for Moon Mountain. Tip got back in his Ford and lit out up the road.

After that folks criticized Fate mightily. They said he must have been scared of Tip, or he would have carried a gun when it reached his ears that Tip was out to get him. It is an unwritten law in the mountains that when two men have a feud on, they both go prepared to fight, and then the one that does the killing can get acquitted on a self-defence plea. If Fate had not been scared, they said, he would have been ready for Tip, and he would not have saved his skin by getting on the side of the law.

And so, as time passed, Fate got to be more and more unpopular. Folks still got him to fiddle at the dances, but they paid him no mind.

Tip never carried his gun any more, but he always talked

powerfully against Fate. Maybe that was why Fate got to be disliked, because Tip was always railing against him, although he never said anything against Tip.

Well, the years passed, and Tip kept saying he would get even some day, and he kept telling folks that Fate was a worthless losel, and he was always saying that Fate held truck with the devil on account of the strange music he played. It got so folks shunned Fate, but he paid them no mind.

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Every year the feeling against him grew and grew, and, on account of it, he found it harder and harder to earn money by hiring out. He could not grow much in the way of crops on the side of Moon Mountain, and it got so he was always having hard times.

All sorts of stories went around about him, but they were doubtless false. Once they even said he stole chickens, but it turned out to be a lie when Sheriff Hunter caught the real thief. There was only one story that had any grain of truth in it, and that was the one that made people really begin to believe that Fate had truck with the devil.

Somebody spied him playing music to the creek. Whoever it was said he came across him in a wildlike place, where there were yellow poplars that grew mighty high before branches ever started out on them. Fate was sitting on a flat rock beside the stream, which tumbled down the mountain in alternate currents and quiet pools.

Folks said Fate was handling the bow right smoothly like and making music to beat over yonder. He was just naturally wiping it out of the fiddle box, and the sounds were just like those made by the creek. You could scarcely tell the difference between the fiddle music and the sound of the water as it rushed and rippled over the slippery green rocks.

And then folks began to say that Fate loved the creek like a man loves a woman. It was a freakish yarn, but none there was to say it was not so. Folks said a man must be a pure mouldwarp

to sit fiddling and spooning with a stream when he ought to be earning bread for his wife and young one.

So it happened that Fate, more than likely because he was an artist, got to be considered a bad one, maybe crazy. It even got so that there was talk of running him out of the country. There are some that say Tip was behind all that talk, but there was no way of telling, because Tip was a shrewd one. Old man Ira Pope had something to do with it, because he hated Fate like poison. He never spoke to Beulah after she ran off with Fate, no matter if she was his onliest child.

It was a long time before anything ever came of the talk of running Fate off, maybe on account of the fact that he was mighty much a man. True, nobody ever recalled his having had a rippet besides the one he had with Tip, but folks suspected that his gentle ways served him to hide his deviltry. That is the way it had been with his old grandfather, Hance Shannon. Old Hance used to be a bad one, and many were the tales that were told after him. Once, according to one of these tales, he got into a fight in a Nashville bar-room and cracked two men's heads together so hard that he killed them both.

That was late one night, but next morning he was back up on Moon Mountain setting out tomato slips at sun-up (and there were no airplanes in those days!). Another time he stood on a flat rock and let men pile sacks of shot on his shoulders until his feet sank ankle-deep in the rock. Of course, the truth wasn't in such tales, but it goes to show how the lies could grow about Fate until they became a danger to him.

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Well, on account of not having been able to hire out, Fate had a mighty hard time of it the winter little Watt was ten. You could tell that things were plumb serious just by the sight of his cabin. The place was downright ramshackle, the most poorly dwelling around Moon Mountain way. Some of the window-panes were gone and the vacant places were stuffed up with old tow sacks.

Fact is, folks say that Fate was hard pushed to provide Beulah and the young one with victuals. The salt bin in the smoke-house did not have a side of bacon in it to its name. Of course, when there was nothing else to eat in the house, Fate could always go out with his shot-gun and kill a mess of game. A nice fat rabbit ain't a thing to be scorned, if a'budy has some corn pone to go with it, though the Lord knows where Fate got meal, he was that poor-folksy.

Young Watt was not in school that winter. That was on account of his not having any shoes to wear. He stayed in the house with his ma most of the time, while he practised on the fiddle, but sometimes he tied tow sacks on his feet to protect them from the frozen ground, and went out to play. Tip Leak did some more talking about that. Tip said a man must be mighty much a scalawag if he would not work enough to be able to provide one kid with shoes to wear to school.

Tip said the innocent child had to suffer because Fate spent his time fiddling in the service of the devil and making love to the creek, like he might have been a devil himself. Tip said Fate ought to be run off. Tip said that there were a lot of worthless scalawags like Fate out in the lowlands, but that he was a pure disgrace to upright, God-fearing mountaineers.

The time Tip was saying all these things he was in Jed Perkin's store of a Saturday night. There were about ten other men in the store, all sitting around the pot-bellied stove, squirting tobacco juice on its red-hot sides. Tip was sitting on a flour barrel at the end of the counter. He had a bottle of corn on the floor down behind the barrel, and every now and then he would take a nip and pass the bottle around. Somebody minded how Tip used not to drink when he was courting Beulah Pope, and that way the conversation got steered around to Fate.

Well, Tip said a lot of harsh things against Fate, and every time the bottle went around he said something about how they all ought to get together and run Fate off. He said they ought to give him a hiding first. He said they could all dress up like

Ku-Kluxers, and if they did not tell off on each other, Sheriff Hunter need never know who did it.

Bill Overhall spoke up and said:

'I allow you're right, Tip. I mind the time I seed him setting on a rock afiddling at the creek. He allows the creek and such things are his friends, and he's plumb stuck-up, like as if he thought he was too good for us.'

Bill Overhall screwed up his lean face and squirted a brown stream on the glowing red side of the stove. The tobacco juice sizzled and vanished. Bill's little eyes were red with the liquor, and some of his tobacco juice ran down his chin and dripped into his overall bib, careless like.

'You're mighty right he thinks he's too good for us,' Tip said, starting the bottle around again. Tip's eyes were not red, but they were jumpy, and their pale blue colour looked kind of glassy. His long, lean body, hunched up on the flour barrel, with his skinny, booted legs hanging down, was tense and fidgety, like a man just itching for trouble. 'He's a d—— stuck-up scalawag,' Tip said, 'and if he was here I'd be liable to say so to his face.'

Well, the talk went on and the bottle kept going around. That was how it happened that while Fate was teaching young Watt to play 'The Ripples' a band of men were walking up the Moon Mountain path in the moonlight. Their feet scrunched on the frozen ground and they were talking in low, excited voices. They had flour sacks with holes cut in them to see through when they put them over their heads as hoods. They stopped to take a drink out of a bottle that was passed around.

'He's a d—— stuck-up scalawag,' said the tallest and the skinniest of them. The moon hid its face behind a cloud that put on silver draperies when the moon slid behind it.

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While the old clock on the mantel tick-tocked on past young Watt's bedtime, Fate showed the boy how to play 'The Ripples.' Beulah sat rocking in a chair, and now and then tending the

kettle on the fire. She was parboiling a rabbit, so it would be nice and tender to fry for breakfast. Every time Beulah looked at the man who was her husband and the man child who was her son her eyes seemed full of misty happiness. You could fair tell that she was proud to be poor with big, gentle Fate and little, eager Watt.

'Pappy, where did you learn to play "The Ripples"?' Watt asked.

'Down to the creek,' Fate told him. 'I set and listened to the water and practised on the fiddle till I learned.'

'Pappy, the creek must be the Lord's fiddle,' Watt said with the earnestness of a young one who has thought out something for himself.

'You're mighty right; it's the Lord's fiddle,' Fate said. The smile left his face, and his brown eyes grew wistful like. 'I allow everything is the Lord's fiddle. The pine trees, for a sample, they make music for the Lord when He causes the wind to blow through them. And the birds make purty music, but they ain't got sense, so I reckon when they sing that's the Lord making music, too. 'Deed, sometimes I think it ain't me doing it when I scrape on that old fiddle box, but I just rub the bow gin the Lord makes the music.'

For a long time Watt was silent, while he stared in the flames that leaped and danced in the fireplace, sending red sparks up the chimney.

'When I play "The Ripples," will it be the Lord playing them?' Watt asked.

'I don't claim to know much about such things,' Fate allowed. Then he said, 'I reckon, son, if you love everything like you love this fiddle, you'll gain favour in the sight of the Lord and He will make you a good fiddler. And you ought to love things, causen they all got souls just like you have, though there's them that say dumb animals ain't got souls. I allow they must have, causen they're God's critters. I reckon everything has got a soul, even this old fiddle box, and the trees and streams.'

'Has the creek got a soul, Pappy?'

'I reckon so, son. More'n likely you could even talk to it,

efen you understood how to play "The Ripples" good enough. 'Deed, efen you——'

Fate stopped speaking and drew his breath in suddenly on account of what he saw at the window. It looked like a man's head with a flour sack over it.

'What was you fixing to say?' Watt asked.

Fate darted a quick glance at his rifle on the rack. Then, thinking not to alarm Beulah and Watt, he said, 'I reckon I better see if my gun's all right to kill a rabbit with to-morrow.' He got up to get the rifle, but stood still in his tracks when he saw the door latch being pulled upward by the rawhide string that hung outside.

Then the door opened inward. Before you could say 'Scat!' the room was full of men with flour sacks over their heads. Beulah screamed. Watt walked up to one of the men and kicked him on the leg, then began to cry. They pounced on Fate, scuffling around him. Not a one of them said a word. Fate let out a bellow and fought like a wild cat, but in a minute they were holding him so he could not move. They shoved him toward the door. As they were taking him out, one of the men turned and said to Beulah, in a disguised voice:

'We're agoing to fix him for the way he neglects you and your young one.'

Beulah was so scared that she could not do anything but scream and cry. Young Watt rushed at the man and started hitting and kicking him as high up on his legs as he could reach. Beulah was so put out she did not notice that her son was using man-size swear words.

They took Fate out and, in spite of his struggles, they sat him on the ground with his legs straddling a tree trunk. Four men on the other side of the tree from him held him, one for each arm and leg. They pulled him against the tree so hard that he could not move, and somebody tore his shirt off.

Beulah and Watt hovered around the edge of the group of grunting, swearing men. One of them made the woman and the boy go back in the cabin.

The tallest and skinniest man had a bull whip. Its long, plaited lash flashed in the moonlight, swished in the air, and cut with a crack into the naked flesh of Fate's back.

The sound was horribly unmistakable to Beulah and Watt in the cabin. Beulah shrieked and fell sobbing on the floor.

Watt did not want his mother to hear the lashing. The fiddle! 'The Ripples!' The fiddle had a soul, the creek had a soul, everything had a soul. Maybe 'The Ripples' would stir good to banish evil. Watt grabbed the fiddle and began playing. He knelt close to his mother's head, so the sound would drown the cracks of the lash on his pappy's back. 'The Ripples.' He played fast and loud, and *ripples* became the rush of a flood.

The man with the bull whip swung the lash with frenzied vengeance. It cut into the flesh, and the moonlight showed little black streams running down the white of Fate's back. Fate grunted and jerked convulsively against the men who were holding his arms and legs around the tree.

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Then through the excitement penetrated the sounds of strange fiddling.

'What's that?' somebody asked suddenly, with the hollow hush of superstitious fear in his voice. Quick glances flashed to Fate and then toward the cabin. Rough, wild sounds scraped on a fiddle. The frenzied sobbing of a woman. They did not know even that Watt could play the fiddle, and to them it seemed that the instrument was giving outcry of its own accord, playing Fate's strange, mad music. The sounds suggested those of the creek, which swished and gurgled down the mountain side two hundred yards away.

An oath came from one of the men holding Fate. Then terror overcame him, and he dropped Fate's arm as though it were the arm of some awful, mysterious thing from another world. He yanked off his hood and stood ready to run.

The tallest man stood with the whip poised in mid-air, while

he stared in a puzzled way at the lighted square of the cabin door.

As the men forgot to hold him Fate staggered erect and steadied himself on his feet for an instant, while fighting strength surged up in him.

The fiddling went on, seeming to grow wilder and more impetuous, not like the gentle 'Ripples' that Fate had learned from the stream, but like some fearful elemental thing.

Fate recognized the man with the whip, in spite of the hood. He stepped toward him, his right arm drawn back for the blow. Just in time, the man saw his danger and started to leap away. The blow was a glancing one, but Fate's fist sent him reeling off between the trees.

'Tip Leak!' Fate yelled as he leaped after the hooded man. 'I'll stomp yore guts out!'

In terror, not so much of the mysterious music as of Fate's aroused fury, Tip rushed fit to kill through the woods. The other men likewise took out through the woods and went crashing off at breakneck speed.

Fate did not run after them. He stood there beneath the tree, while tears of pain and rage dripped down his cheeks and drops of blood trickled down his naked back.

He could hear the other men running down the side of the mountain in one direction, and Tip was running in the other. Tip was running toward the creek.

Then there was a splash in the creek. Not several quick splashes, like a man would make running across, but one loud splash, and then silence.

When Fate went back in the cabin, young Watt was helping his mother up from the floor, telling her that the men had gone. Fate threw his arms around both of them. Faintly, through the open door, could be heard the creek playing its own ripples — the Lord's fiddle.

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Well, next day gin Sheriff Hunter arrested Bill Overhall and the others, he had to look high and low afore he ever found Tip.

Finally he came across Tip's body, lying face down in the creek, drowned in three inches of water. Some allowed afterwards that Tip tripped on the creek bank and fell so hard he knocked himself senseless on the bottom; but some say the creek had a power to help Fate out of trouble.

I Hear You, Mr. and Mrs. Brown

BY JOSEPHINE HERBST

(From *This Quarter*)

THE Ripleys were close together as a family. They lived to themselves and no one ever thought of them, except as a family that stuck pretty close at home. Mrs. Ripley was a fine big woman, several inches taller than her husband. When a family group picture was taken outside their store, Mrs. Ripley made her husband stand at the edge of the sidewalk nearest the store, and she stepped off the sidewalk a little behind him. With the two children planted in front of the couple, this arrangement was hidden from the eye, and in the picture Mr. and Mrs. Ripley appeared to be of the same height. His shoulders were narrower than hers, and the picture couldn't hide that, but what anyone would really notice about Ripley was his beard. He was all beard. For a man beginning to be bald, he had a very thick black beard. When you saw Ripley you saw his beard, and when you thought of him, it was only the beard you could be sure of. His eyes were too small and weak to be remembered, but the beard stood out as clear as could be.

The two children took after the father. Everyone said what a funny thing it was that the boy and girl should both take after the father and what a pity, with Mrs. Ripley so handsome. Of the two, the boy was the mother's favourite, but he was too shy to make her very proud. She was always after him to straighten up and hold up his head, but she never made much of an effort to push him out with other boys. When Edgar came running home with a bloody nose, crying, she just washed him off and let it go at that. More and more she began to let his father have his way with the boy. When Edgar was only fourteen, Ripley decided he needed him in the store and that ended

Edgar's education. Mrs. Ripley said Edgar ought to keep on with his schooling, but the boy himself seemed anxious to quit and that settled it.

For all that the Ripleys stood so close together as a family, Edgar and his father were always disagreeing in the store. When something went wrong, Mr. Ripley had a way of singing out for Edgar that made the clerks wink at each other and whisper that Edgar was going to get it. If Mrs. Berry phoned about her order coming late, Edgar got bawled at about it. If the orders to the hospital were delayed, Edgar was pretty certain to catch it. Mr. Ripley told his wife that training Edgar to his proper responsibilities was a trying job, but he wasn't the man to shirk it. Mrs. Ripley had little to say beyond warning her husband to remember the neighbours and not to talk so loud. She was always shushing and looking out of the window in a frightened way when an argument began.

Edgar worked in the store early and late, and there was never time for anything but resting up on Sunday. He began to feel his lack of education and in the evenings, when he read the paper, he would sometimes lay it down and look across the table at his father. If anyone caught him looking intently at his father like that, he would get red and pick up his paper again. His paper was about all that Edgar had, for all that he was such a young fellow. Mr. Barnes, one of the older clerks, teased him about getting a girl, and Edgar often thought with pleasure of being teased in this way, but he never made an effort to get a girl. He just grew older and people said that Edgar Ripley was a good steady boy who really appreciated his home the way few young folks did nowadays.

The Ripleys always seemed content with the simple homey things. They had five rooms back of the store looking out on a scrap of a garden. At night people passing could see the lighted windows behind the tops of tall flowers and the family sitting around the table. But you had to pass early in the evening to see that; Mrs. Ripley was sure to draw the shades down soon after the lights were on and she had a quick frightened way of

hurrying toward the windows as if she were afraid someone might already have seen in.

The daughter was growing up. She was turning out to be a rather heavy dull girl, but an excellent cook. Mr. Ripley was very fond of his daughter, who in many ways was the image of himself. But he always said that he would give ten years of his life if just one of his children had inherited his talent. Mr. Ripley's talent was an artistic one; he could paint pictures.

His trade had originally been a cutter of grave monuments, but the work had been too hard on his eyes. A cousin was making a nice little living at a general store and Ripley decided to try his hand at that. Beginning this store had put considerable hardship on both the husband and wife. Besides her house-keeping, Mrs. Ripley had gone around on a bicycle taking orders. Long after the need for taking orders had passed, Mrs. Ripley remembered the hard time they had passed through and the humiliation of borrowing money from her well-to-do brother to begin the venture. She often wrote her sister in the East that she hoped *she* would never know the necessity of going into debt and that it was almost better to owe money to a stranger than to a brother who had to find out how bad things were with you.

The two sisters had always carried on a very full correspondence since their marriages, but there were some letters that Mrs. Ripley had written in the first five years of her married life that she hated to recall. When she did, she always wrote her sister and said: 'I hope you have burned all those silly letters I wrote in Bedford, Fanny, I surely hope you have.' Fanny never answered this and Mrs. Ripley never was certain that the letters might not be lying around for her sister's growing girls to read.

Mrs. Ripley took out many grudges in letters to her sister. But about her husband's painting talent, she said very little. He began to develop this talent soon after they took the general store. He subscribed to an art magazine and invested in folios of the world's great paintings. He took out the old junk in the attic over the store, tacked burlap around the walls, and hauled home a few pieces of verdigrised brass. Mrs. Ripley helped him

put up an old cot bed and he often slept in the attic instead of in his own room that opened into his wife's room. The attic roof sloped over his head; with the door closed he seemed far away from the rest of the house and safe.

Mr. Ripley began to give more and more of his spare time to the attic. On sunny days, he often left Edgar in charge of the store and went off to a nearby field for a little sketching. 'What's a man got a son for if he can't put some responsibility on him?' he would say. One of his watercolours won a prize at the State fair, and after that he sometimes talked of going to New York for a winter in the studios.

When Eloise was a bulky girl in high school, Edgar decided to leave home and take up a claim in Montana. His father fitted him out with supplies, and for all that they had been such a close family, neither Mr. nor Mrs. Ripley seemed to think it anything unusual to send their son to a cold lonely ranch in Montana. They seemed to think that as long as he had plenty to eat and good heavy underwear, he would be all right. When customers inquired about Edgar, Mr. Ripley would read bits of his letters, how the snow was fourteen feet deep and everything frozen solid, and he would smile a little as if it were good sport for Edgar. The whole family seemed to think Edgar was getting along all right. They lived on in the same way without a break.

Mrs. Ripley was very careful of her health, and when she went out into the chilly morning air to hang up a washing, she always stuffed her ears with cotton. Before she went to bed, she rubbed her neck with a high grade of olive oil, massaging it carefully before a glass. With her daughter looking on, she would brush her heavy hair many times, counting the strokes. She would look proudly at herself in the glass where she showed up so much handsomer than her daughter. When Eloise cooked a particularly good dish, she gave her credit for it with: 'Well, the way to a man's heart is his stomach, they say,' and she would smile in such a manner that the poor girl was all the more aware of her plainness.

In the second year that Edgar spent on a claim in Montaña he wrote a very bitter letter to his father. The snow and ice and loneliness were too much for him. He broke down and wrote a letter blaming his father for his life.

'I'm just a young fellow and I feel a thousand years old,' he wrote. 'What else am I fitted for but hard work? You took me out of school and put me to work when I was just a kid. I never learned how to do anything. I'm good for nothing for all my hard work.' The letter was written in pencil, and it was daubed with dried flour paste. Mrs. Ripley got very pale when she read this letter, but Ripley boiled and shouted.

'A yellow good-for-nothing,' he shouted, 'a whiner. Haven't I worked hard all my life? What about me? Does he think of anyone but himself? No. He wants to shirk and be pampered: that's what he wants.' He wouldn't be quieted. Mrs. Ripley sat looking at the letter in her hand. She folded the letter into little pleats and her fingers trembled. She let her husband storm away without any reference to the neighbours.

At last she said: 'The boy's right.'

'Right? How do you mean, right?'

'I mean just what I say. The boy's right. It's your fault. You took him out of school and stunted his growth with hard work. You didn't give him a chance. Afraid he'd turn out to be a real man and shame you.'

Ripley stood still looking at his wife. She just looked back at him boldly and he shook all over. He could hardly stand. There was no answer to that look of hers. He turned away and went upstairs to his attic and fell down like lead on the narrow bed. With his face down he could still see that look, accusing him. He wasn't the man to make a woman happy. They had two children, it is true. The neighbours had no way of learning how it had come to be with him and his wife. He had come into the room once when Mrs. Ripley was writing a letter to her sister, had stepped softly behind her chair, and read over her shoulder: 'I might as well be an old maid.'

With the store and his painting he managed to put that sen-

tence out of his mind. When he thought of it, he got hot and angry. After Edgar was gone, he shouted at Mr. Barnes when he remembered. But everything was so even in their lives, his wife was such a stay-at-home, everyone said what a happy little family it was, that Ripley let himself be persuaded he had come to believe that his wife must be content.

Ripley made no suggestion about what to do for Edgar. For days after the letter came he kept out of the store, and almost out of the house. He was gone, no one knew where, with his painting outfit. At night he came home, dog tired and he took every chance to bully them all. He refused to answer his son's letter, but when Mrs. Ripley wrote out a cheque for him to sign, he signed without a word. She had decided to send Edgar money to leave Montana and to help him get a job in Seattle. Ripley quieted down and got back into the harness again. Sometimes she caught him watching his daughter Eloise soberly. Once in the night she reared up thinking she heard him cry. It was Ripley who finally suggested that Eloise be sent to college.

Mrs. Ripley was sensible enough not to try for anything fancy with her daughter. If Eloise was going to college, it had better be for a domestic science course. If the girl got married, her one attraction would be strengthened; if not, domestic science offered a good opening for women who must earn a living.

Eloise put in three years at Corvallis. If she was never able to improve on her excellent cookery, she learned a great deal about vitamins and calories and in her third year she began to send home kodak pictures of herself and other young women and young men on picnics and in various poses. When she came home for the summer, she was still too stout and unwieldy but her eyes were brighter, and she made two trips to a beauty parlour to have a growth of hair on her upper lip removed. After that Mrs. Ripley was not surprised when her daughter confided that she was engaged, and as proof brought out a tiny chip diamond ring.

Eloise's engagement stirred things up in the quiet Ripley home for several weeks. Mr. Ripley wanted to tell all the people

in the store, and maybe put a little announcement in the papers, but Mrs. Ripley said they should keep it to themselves until the date of the wedding was near. The mother and daughter went shopping for a good sized cedar chest, and Eloise at once began to fill it with sheets and table linen. It took her a year to begin on her personal belongings, and then she picked out good sensible designs made of strong nainsook.

The fiancé was studying to be an electrical engineer, and the marriage would have to be postponed for a time until he finished his course and got started. The practical Eloise decided to teach school while she waited. She was so excellent a teacher that the school board insisted on having her return, and as they raised her salary substantially she went back for a second year. After school hours she worked on embroidery for her hope chest. The nightgowns and underthings began to turn a little yellow, and she sent them occasionally to be laundered.

After Eloise's second year of teaching, there was some talk of marrying, but Burt always had some excuse. He had no money saved, he was just trying to make a start, they had better wait. Eloise had saved almost a thousand dollars, but Burt had a dozen reasons why they should not touch that money for marriage. Mr. Ripley was getting more and more nervous about the marriage, but he was afraid to ask about it. During his daughter's vacations, she sat at the table in the evenings, slowly embroidering. Her hope chest was filled, and she began to pack the overflow into cardboard boxes.

Ripley began to be more irritable in the store. He was continually flying off the handle over nothing. People began to talk about it, but it was no use for Mrs. Ripley to remonstrate with her husband. He just burst out at her for her pains. The family continued to sit around the table in the evenings, but Mrs. Ripley often came out of the house and stood in the dark under the trees or moved restlessly about among the flower beds.

The Ripleys were really relieved when the war came and gave Burt a good excuse for putting off the wedding. He was one of the first to enlist and wrote that he thought it his duty to go.

'Burt thinks it his duty to go,' Mrs. Ripley wrote her sister Fanny, 'and we are all so proud of him. Eloise has decided to do her bit by teaching until he comes home.'

When the other girls were hastily marrying, Eloise took up knitting and made sweaters and helmets and wristlets for Burt. She got very sallow and lifeless, and everyone said how hard the war was on poor Eloise. Some of the girls of her acquaintance made trips to the camps where their sweethearts were in training, but Burt never wrote for her. He was in Virginia and had the excuse of being too far away to visit.

During her vacations at home, Eloise brought out her knitting every night, as the family sat around the table. Mr. Ripley couldn't keep his eyes off it, and during the evening he would burst out a dozen times about the store and the clerks, even about Edgar who wrote home so seldom. He would spend the evening fuming about one little thing after the other and finally go to bed. Very late at night he would hear his wife's step move firmly past his door.

Mr. Ripley worked himself into being really sick, the clerk said. Before the boys began coming home, he was in bed. It was some wasting disease that gradually affected his spine. His beard thinned out, and he looked small and transparent. All day he sat in the sun turning over the folios of the world's great paintings and talking of the time he was going to New York. His wife and children seemed entirely out of his mind. It was Mrs. Ripley who finally sent for her son to come from Seattle to help out in the store.

Edgar attended strictly to business and kept out of his father's way. The clerks liked him and quit talking of throwing up their jobs. As Ripley got weaker, they set up his bed in one of the downstairs rooms where he could call to his wife in the kitchen. At Christmas time when Eloise came home, she decided not to go back for a second term.

When he saw himself surrounded by his little family again, Mr. Ripley for the first time began to get suspicious that he would die. In the evenings he would lie in bed looking into

the other room where his wife and the children sat around the table with the lamp. Eloise had taken up embroidery again, and now and then she would write to Burt, pausing at the end of each page to look vacantly ahead of her. Nothing more was said of the wedding: she seemed helpless to hurry things. Mrs. Ripley said it looked as if she would never have any grandchildren, and smiled in her curious way.

The Ripleys had only seen their future son-in-law once on a brief visit to his fiancée. Lying alone so much, Mr. Ripley began to think over all the reasons Burt had given for putting off the wedding. He was suddenly convinced that the young fellow was trying to get out of it. He put his folios away and worked himself into a fever. He'd show the young squirt. The impudent pup. Try to sneak out of it. Yellow dog.

Every day now Ripley asked Eloise some new question about Burt. Where was he? When was he coming? Had he a job? When would they be married? When he heard that Burt was home again with his mother and only forty miles away, he was sure that Eloise was going to be left in the lurch. Why didn't he come to see her? Trying to squirm out of it: that was all.

Ripley lay in his bed fuming about Burt. Edgar, the store, the clerks, his folios were out of his mind now. He meant to get even with Burt. So the squirt thought he could make promises and break them? Could come and go as he pleased? He'd show him. His anger increased with his wife's calmness. Ripley felt that she was siding with Burt to cheat her own child. Eloise, the very spit of her father, would not be left if he could help it. He got so thin that his wife could lift him easily from his bed to his chair. If his milk was too warm or too cold and he scolded about it, they pampered him. It frightened him to have them soothe him for everything he did.

At night when the lamp was on, he found it harder and harder to see into the other room where the others sat around the table. When he could no longer tell the difference between the blur that was his wife and the one that was Edgar, he spoke in the middle of the night about his daughter. Mrs. Ripley was holding

his head to drink and he said: 'I want to see Eloise married. I want to see that before I die.'

It was the first time that he had spoken that word. It sounded very terrible in the night. Nobody could ignore a dying man's wish. Eloise cried a great deal, but she pulled herself together and wrote a long letter to Burt. Mrs. Ripley was the only active one. She feverishly cleaned the house, and the night before the wedding she was out in the dark pushing the heavy lawn mower over the grass, rushing it up and down so that passers-by halted curiously. She pulled the shades up to let the light fall from the rooms inside on the little plot of ground, and after the lawn was cut she went around on her hands and knees cutting the straggling grass that clung to the fence and the corners.

The house was like wax too. There was only the minister, the family, and a cousin from the other side of town who stood, pop-eyed, with her two children clutching her skirts. Eloise was red-eyed and timid, but Mrs. Ripley had dressed herself up in a rich brown silk and had pinned a heavy red geranium on her shoulder.

Burt in a plain business suit was very pale. He was a slight timid-looking fellow and his replies could hardly be heard. Mr. Ripley had been sinking rapidly and was propped up with big clean pillows. His hands lay very tiny and brown on the fresh sheets. He strained his eyes, but could see no further than his hands. He could hear moving around and the door opening and shutting. People whispered. He could smell flowers. The cousin was sniffing. When the minister began to read, Ripley strained to hear. Eloise was actually being married. She made her replies in a low firm voice. The bridegroom's replies were, beside hers, very feeble. But Mr. Ripley heard them both.

'I hear you, Mr. and Mrs. Brown,' he called out in his tiny penetrating voice, speaking the name so pointedly it was like a crow. Even the minister started and turned to look at Burt. The bridegroom had been standing in a daze, but when he heard his name, he roused himself and stared straight at the

sick man. He looked hard at his father-in-law as if he now saw him for the first time.

But the sick man couldn't see the look Burt gave him. He could see as far as his own hands and that was all. He sat braced against the pillows, studying his fingers complacently.

The Other Side of the Street

BY PAUL HORGAN

(From *The Yale Review*)

MRS. SCHLUZER sat reading *The Agony of an Empress* in the warm afternoon. A glass of goldfish-coloured orangeade stood next a fifty-cent box of chocolates on the wicker tabouret at her elbow. The sun ventured steadily in through the blinds that screened the side porch where she sat. Fudge, the fox terrier, panted fatly at the foot of his mistress's lounge, while from the lawn came the consoling whirr and spatter of the hose-spray.

It was a quarter to three, because Bertha was setting her ferns out in the sun next door. Mrs. Schluzer turned another royal page and anointed her lips with the velvety, gradual kiss of a chocolate banana cream. Across the street Mrs. Klobstock came out on her front porch a moment and then, after a swift look whose rays shafted both up and down the street, retired within again. In a moment the lace curtain just behind the 'Room and Board Available for Gentlefolk' sign was twitched and settled, as it always was in mid-afternoon after Mrs. Klobstock had had her 'breath of air.' Remote in the sunny afternoon, the other side of the street was somehow active and interesting.

Mrs. Schluzer lazily stirred in discontent. If only the Empress Euphemia would appear now, and sit down to chat with her! The same old life repeating one of its afternoons! Harry Schluzer would, at five-forty, return, and —

Harry had strolled across her consciousness for the first time one sunny Sabbath morning in Reward, where she had gone to visit her cousins, the Zimmendahls. In the dusty areas of the square before the church, he had sauntered by, his derby hat on his oiled curls, and his buggy whip rakishly switching in one hand. He had halted, stared, and gone on; and that evening,

by a divine coincidence, Emma Gressing had brought him to call, and the harmonium in the parlour had tried its bellows to the point of rupture, so great was the good will of the little party, and so uncontrollable was Hortense's infatuation.

The wedding: in the best taste. The honeymoon: two days in Chicago, a lake ride to Duluth, and back home by way of Monamossee, where they inspected the famous caves with reverence and hidden alarm. The removal: Harry's fine job in the freight office in Advantage — and that was all; all; except that she grew pinker and plumper, and he grew softer and lazier, though his rise had been steady, for he was now district freight inspector for the Midland and Central Railway, and had had two personal letters from the president, Mr. Pennybannock, on business.

Oh! life was comfortable, and happy; but who, she thought, wanted anything but magnificent misery, or superb despair, or persecution that lighted the days with an inner glow richer than the mere sun's that daily revealed the city of Advantage?

With a shrill denunciatory shriek, Fudge leaped to the screen door, scolding a young man who stood on the cement steps of the porch. He held his cap and a black leather case in one hand, while in the other a wicker suitcase proclaimed the transient.

Mrs. Schluzer edged her round legs off the plump mattress of the swing lounge, pretending for herself and the young man that her legs had never been up. This pretence made it difficult to find her stance easily when she arose to play the hostess. She laid away her novel, and chewed very rapidly to dismiss the banana cream.

'Fudge!' she commanded, with a smile of apology to the visitor that her animal should have been so uncordial. 'Fudge! stop touting the gentleman.' 'He's very careful about strangers,' she explained, pulling a corner of her waist down over her rear hip, and ignoring the action.

'Psoui, psoui,' said the young man, kissing the air at Fudge and snapping all his fingers at him. The little white dog finally

accepted peace and tried his small hams in a comfortable sitting position. Then, Mrs. Schluzer, having found in her examination of the young man that he looked like her cousin Emil — the same pink compactness about the cheeks and neck, the unsurprised blue eyes, and the meaningless but agreeable smile, the same observable thickness of flesh under his chequered suit whose lapels pointed quite bravely upward — leaned towards him, and asked, 'You were wanting — ?'

He looked at her, and set his suitcase down, and rolled his cap and put it into his coat pocket. Then, with a frank relapse into a confidential air, he said: 'I've just moved here to Advantage. My home is in Calliope, and my sister used to live here; so she told me of a good place to live, where you can get your food and all; she said Mrs. Elsie Klobstock had a good house along here, somewhere; I couldn't find it. Are you Mrs. Klobstock?'

Mrs. Schluzer widened her elbows in a slightly magnificent gesture. Harry Schluzer could keep his wife, thank you, and no work for her. (One of the worst episodes of the unfortunate Empress's later days was the humiliating mistreatment of her by her former courtiers. It is on record that she was once taunted with her alleged likeness to a certain Frau Gebbert, a fish-wife!) The young man, however, was very simple in his question. She therefore said with equal simplicity, smoothing the white embroidered ruffles of her waist, '*Hum*-uh. I'm Merz. Harry Schluzer. Merz. Klobstock lives —'

Suddenly it came to Hortense that if this young man left her doorstep, and went across the street with his cases, she would see his slenderly bulging back, and the opening of the lace-curtained door, and Mrs. Klobstock's rapid intense inspection of him, and then the closing of the door, and — the end. It would be another victory for the other side of the street, which always had everything — all the fascinations of life: the house where the Italian bootlegger lived with his un-wife, the doctor's office where dramas of life and death (she knew from short stories and films and 'ads') were acted hourly, the busy church

on the corner where weddings often happened, Mrs. Klöbstock's house where really refined people boarded.

'Come in: I'll tell you all about local living facilities,' she said, and the young man, lifting his suitcase and the black box, followed her into the ferny places of the porch. Fudge begrudged him the honour, but only sniffed, wetly.

'Sit down,' said Hortense, and the young man did so, with a certain elaboration of the act, so that she noticed the elegance of his movement, and the bland acceptance of the chair that his body made.

There fell a silence. (My gracious! she thought, how shall I? —) He relieved matters. Looking at the house next door, where the ferns turned in the sunlight, he said, 'There's a pretty picture — composition, we call it.'

She looked at the shadows made by Bertha's bay window. 'Composition? Are you an —?'

He nodded. 'Sort of. I take pictures. That's my camera, there. I've studied colour work, too, and free-hand. But I like photos best.'

She became, suddenly, pitapalpitant, and handed him the chocolates, trusting to her God to quiet the tumult in her shirt-waist. What was it? She had seen plenty of photographers —

He took a candy, and knowing, as a male, that she had made an undeniable overture, he related further, until he was appraising her patronizingly with a warm eye.

But if Hortense had seen plenty of photographers, she had never had one in her house before, who perhaps would take her picture in the favourite pose. It was a dream, in its suddenness, and in the excitements it suggested to her.

'Why, how perfly fine,' she said, urging the candy on him again (until he said to himself, 'Hell! she's easy, she'll fall over'). 'I've always been interested in photos. I haven't had one made for some time, now —'

He studied her. 'W'd make a good one,' he said, with a friendly suggestiveness.

They sat looking at each other for a long time, and then they both blushed and stirred. 'I have some plates —'

She rose and adjusted the waist over the hip. 'Lovely — I'll go get ready — I want a royal photograph, so come in, come in.'

He followed her (his legs confused with the ambulating body of Fudge) into the front room. There she showed him the heavy plush portières, the mahogany pedestal on which a long white-gloved elbow could rest with dignity, the fern that could be put into the background with the gilt chairs.

'Look,' she said, bringing him *The Agony of an Empress*, and pointing to the frontispiece, which revealed the unhappy Euphemia in the ninth year of her reign. She was *en grande tenue*, and the tiara, the orders, the ribbon, the ermine over the chair, the crown on the table, the cushion for the sceptre and the lesser orb, the brailed curtains at the back with heavy gold cords and tassels, the ear-ring that must have been an emerald. . . .

'I see,' said the young man. 'You get ready, and I'll fix the background.' She breathed eagerly, like a little girl. 'Run along,' he added, patting her fat shoulder blade, which she couldn't resent because he was entering into the spirit of her happy desire.

He pulled the furniture about (thinking, She's some'm like Alice, over at Fort Scrانley. I guess it don't pay to trifle with these married dames, in the afternoon, she may have a husband in town, she's nice and juicy —).

Hortense paused on the landing, and took a deep breath. Her half hour had wrought splendours upon her, and, like every other woman of her class and period, she could assume a true histrionic effectiveness when some external agency released her from the embarrassed democratic canons of her daily life. Now, in her best evening gown (sequins and moiré) with all the false gems she possessed, with her fur coat worn as a cloak, and her mother's long white gloves on, she managed a rich feeling that was definitely conveyed in her bearing and expression. This was the enchantment of being something, which her wide laziness daily held away from her. Her friends were active: they went to places and accomplished things; and happiness followed. But Hortense had never been able to say, 'I had a good choir rehearsal,'

or, 'The preserved peaches is doing 'st fine'; or, 'My! I enjoyed making those curtains,' when her husband joined her for their dull little evenings.

She raised one shoulder slightly, and lowered the corresponding eyebrow; and descended upon the photographer, whose background was a masterpiece of the baroque. He leaned upon the piano with a real admiration for her sudden beauty and splendour. (Jeest, he thought, husband or no husband —)

His reddish hair covered a skull whose extensive back spaces connected with a sturdy neck, that would, in time, be leathered by the sun and wind. He had pale blue eyes that seemed to be lashless, for the tiny foliage around them was almost white. Hortense, sensing his immediate respect for her, now that she was panoplied, took advantage of his arrogant stares to move into the area of the palatial scene that he had built out of her gilt chairs, the ferns, the pedestal from Cousin Harriet, and the brailed, braided plush.

'I feel so silly!' she said, colouring, because he was forgetful of his profession. 'But I do want to try it —'

'Hep-hep,' said Bruce, hopping into action, 'Let's get busy. You sort of took the wind out of me sails.'

He went to the window and began to arrange the shades for light, and became at once marvellously efficient so that Mrs. Schluzer was in her turn suddenly respectful. It seemed to her with a quick insistence as if the young man had commanded her as a man to observe him, and then intrigued her instantly with the undeniable evidences of skill that he was now showing her: the manœuvrings of the tripedal camera (in whose black accordion there lived a strange bird) she remembered from her childhood portraits (whose eyes would suddenly observe her, and register, in some labyrinth of that magic box, the lineaments of her features). (I don't mean it, she confessed to herself, but they always used t' say, 'See the birdie.' My God, if Harry was to see me with this rouge on! —)

The afternoon was advancing steadily towards the moment when the sun would be arrested by the turreted shingles of Mrs.

Klobstock's house; the evening papers were already turning warmly damp on front lawns, and in the front parlour of Harry Schluzer's house —

'Now,' said Bruce, 'Let me have a look!' He got inside his black tent and saw her, glassily granulate, and upside down, looking pursed and splendid, she thought.

I think I might try to squeeze her a second, Bruce considered, but these wives — I dunno —

They went through with it, and she decided that the Empress was not particularly inspiring to-day.

They planned another, and he twinkled his plates so that she found his dexterity in feeding and emptying the camera something fabulous.

'My robe —' she said a moment later, when he had moved her so that the light caught her ear-rings and made them burn gravely in its beams. He came forward, and knelt to arrange those spurious fur folds.

She regarded him from above, looking down, and her attitude was almost tender, simply because any attitude leaning over is apt to be suggestive of madonna-like gentleness. For his part, the handling of her furs was suddenly a symbolic thing — Alice, over at Fort Scrانley, sure was like her (I remember how we used to do with Alice: these ankles are the same). A thick blush arose out of his covered body and surrounded his neck and head. Hortense thought it was only the strain of kneeling that turned him so cherry-ripe. But Bruce knew that if he sought this plumply winning girl with his ardours, she would be likely to resist with a panting smile for a moment, and then, like Alice, whom she so much resembled, let her lips tremble and then fall to his kiss, her eyes meanwhile strangely filling with tears — probably of self-pity, he decided with an amorist's shrewdness, for there were sulky shadows about her, and in her house, that he had long ago learned as the dark banners of a dull love.

The fur was trailed upon the Brussels. The eyes of Hortense found him strange and new momentarily. (Harry is so *same*, she said to herself.) Bruce seemed to be a fresh person every moment,

for he was now the intent artist, a moment ago he had been the kneeling suppliant for the favours of an empress, and when he arrived in the afternoon sun, he was simply a young man with the same farm-lad looks of her cousin Emil, who had fascinated her years ago in the light of an August evening when the hay lay in windrows.

'Now: good!' he said, while his left hand suspended her pose in the air, and his right described a slow, pneumatic circle at whose final arc the bulb was released and the impression was filtered upon the plate within the black, boxy aviary.

She relaxed, her heart pounding a little; for he had compelled her eyes in the pose, and the jewels and the furs were suddenly a false part of her. She felt that this was trumpery. Empress? Dear God, she was only Mrs. Schluzer, of Elmer Avenue; her robes were dyed rabbit, her emeralds were verdine glass, her long white gloves belonged to her mother. But Bruce made her ashamed of her momentary shame. He was there, looking at her, and it came to Hortense in an intense happiness that no woman need be more than woman when love intruded rudely and successfully. The remoteness of Bruce from her life made him swiftly desirable; and instead of the idyll of the royal woman, she now underwent a narrow *frisson* that took her into those lazy days when Harry was a new dimension of her existence, and when the dust that arose from the lanes as they walked tasted in her mouth like the divine particles of cloud that shrouded God in His Heaven.

The curtains of the window turned greyer, for the sun just now had suffered indecent eclipse by the black turrets of Mrs. Klobstock's, and Bruce stepped towards her, confusion of purpose within him (for if she don't like it, he thought, I stand to get t'hell in trouble, but look at her!)

He wasted no more time. Like a dream figure, so astonishingly unknown was he to her, he embraced her shoulders, while she struggled backwards weakly, making the demanded resistance.

'Well, what do you mean, why I never in my life, you're so
next — oh —'

He had found her lips, and had kissed them.

The street went its golden length in the dying sunlight; gentlemen were wending homewards. Harry Schluzer mounted his front steps with the *Reporter* under his arm, his cigar smoked short to meet his stubble moustache.

He let himself in with his house key, and took off his straw hat, leaving it on the newel post where his wife always found it with a little cry of regret.

He whistled —



— as he did every evening to tell her that he had arrived; and if there was nothing beautifully musical about it, it was at least suggestive of a contented robin announcing, as best he could, his safe return to the nest.

'My husband,' said Hortense against the stifling embrace of Bruce, 'no, don't.'

He understood at once; and despite the rapid vision of shot-guns, headlines, horsewhips, or, worse — the Klan, he could not desert her warm person as immediately as his reason urged him to. But it was, even so, in time enough. At the entry of Harry into the disarranged parlour, they were again in the positions of client and artist.

Harry never tried to understand anything that surprised him. Now, he merely thought how handsome his wife looked, and what a sunburned young man was taking her picture — though when the thing was over, and the young man came to shake hands with 'my husband, Mr. Schluzer,' Harry noticed that far from being sunburned, the photographer was actually sallow.

'Well — Harry, you've spoiled my surprise,' said Hortense, flicking at him with a tail of fur that her nervous fingers had found with gratitude in those piteously terrible moments when Harry had followed his elk tooth emblem into the room.

'Elch, elch, elch,' laughed Harry, with a cigary éffusion. 'Trying to fool the Old Man for his birthday, and the Old Man spoiled it, eh?'

('Thank God he thought of his birthday,' she thought.)

Harry winked at Bruce, who had packed his equipment with preposterous speed. Bruce managed to wink back before saying, 'I'll have proofs in a couple of days. Thank you. I'm sure they'll be very tony.'

Hortense smiled and came forward, so that Harry saw her rouge, and wondered angrily a moment; but he decided sensibly that pictures aren't like real life — 'you have to bring it out.'

'Now how do I get to Mrs. Klobstock's?' asked Bruce, and Harry told him, took him to the door, escorted by Fudge, who emerged from a cubby-hole in the hallway to preside with silent scepticism at the parting.

In the parlour, Mrs. Schluzer sank into a green plush chair, covering her face with her hands, her body lacerated by pains of the most unbearable frequency and temper. He had gone. But what was worse: he had not gone into a cloudy region of myth and memory, but across the street to the hated Mrs. Klobstock, who always had the amusing things.

If Harry hadn't been there, she could have sent Bruce far off, and he could have come now and then like a Grail Sir Knight to see her — now she would see him every day, he lived across the street, there was nothing romantic in that. (Oh, my God!)

She was weeping when Harry returned, and every dull bitterness she had in her heart against him arose now clamouring for release upon the kind stupid front of him. But he leaned over her, and the thick smell of his cigar wrapped her, closely, familiarly, so that she relaxed into the known torpescence that was her life, confessing to him that her head ached from the photographing, and suffering his bristly kiss without a single sensation, and feeling within her that her idyll for ever was melted away, for neither queen nor mistress was she, although Fudge panted at her feet with devotional rapidity. Harry had gone back to his paper, and had left her to herself—

Mrs. Klobstock gingerly accepted Bruce. He went into her brown and red hallway, gave a look about him, and accepted her, in turn, with the jaunty deposit of his hat on the left antler of the mirrored coat-and-hat rack. The landlady, massaging a mole on her cheek, watched his retreat up the stairs with that strange sense of wonder that overcame her every time she took another boarder — lives crossed one another and patterns resulted. Would this one be symmetrical, with the little decencies of community life casually observed? Or would she hear, with birds of alarm whirring in her breast some late night, the horribly tentative ascent of the stairs, the tragic mumble of the drunk, the assault upon the bedroom door, and the final, obliterating 'ga-nunnk!' that would tell her he had slipped in the bathroom?

Perhaps he wouldn't, and there was always the chance that in the evenings he'd begin to talk to her in the green, or back, parlour. Her lonely bosom trembled at that sweet prospect, for no husband, or lover, required she; only someone to ask her now and then how her cat was, and if she'd care to look at his copy of *The Country Gentleman*.

Bruce, in a few weeks, liked Advantage. He liked Mrs. Klobstock, because she nervously pampered him, and he liked Elmer Avenue.

Every evening, returning from his job with McLarney's Studio, where he retouched pictures, he walked on the side of the street opposite Mrs. Klobstock's. (It must be, he thought, because of the Queen.)

That moment when he had held Hortense to his silk-shirted breast had left marvellous reverberations. It was the highest romance of his amorist's career, because never before had he failed to reduce to his furious, promising will the object of his attentions. Hortense — how she had refused him, how she had then wept in taking his kiss! How Harry had come in, and how narrowly the explosive aftermath had been missed! Bruce, for the first time in his life, took time to think over one of his affairs; and Mrs. Schluzer, and her house, her side of the street, everything about her, became for him unutterably romantic, and

touched with those divine rays of fancy like the sun's that would, in a few weeks, bring a perishing, dear beauty to the tall trees that patterned the Avenue.

Every evening at half-past five, he walked by her house, and he always turned his head away from it; because the first evening, she had sat on the porch and turned her head away after seeing him. (She's a real lady, he told himself, denying that glorious state to the countless girls he'd taken by surprise.)

And because she had not looked back at him, and because the pictures were all failures (not even a decent proof to show her) he mused, he had never gone back. She regarded him respectfully both as man and artist, he felt. It was another link in the chain of incidents that made Elmer Avenue (her side) especially romantic.

Mrs. Schluzer, resuming her designed ways, was now and then bitter that Harry didn't know, that he'd never know, how near he had been to grass-widowerhood. In the weeks that unrolled before her like any other weeks, she was even surprised to find that she wasn't very unhappy — just tired and a little disagreeably dulled by the flow of existence.

But one morning, perhaps three weeks after the photographs had been taken, she awoke with a start to realize that Bruce had never brought her proofs. It was the last straw. She lay in her bed, which in daytime was covered with fancily coloured satin pillows and cushions, and laughed at the ceiling. If anything were needed to free her of her last fondness for his unknown, near presence that day, then the fact of his incompetence was enough. To-day Harry had gone down to the office, had kissed her through a familiar (not unpleasant) mist of nicotine. She didn't have to wash the breakfast dishes until after lunch — and then she remembered that there was no lunch, for it was Harry's day at the Lions, and she could eat down town.

She sat up. 'I'll get a book to read,' she said, happily, and a half-memory of the intimate joys that she'd had from between the inscrutable boards of countless last books shook her into joyous action. 'I can get something romantic,' she said, and

when she dressed, she considered herself in the roles of all the heroines she'd ever met.

She got home at a little after three, tired, hot, but pleased at her day. A few minutes here, fingering stockings and gloves; there, a session with some quilted house robes; a bout with a stubborn hat that was too small for her, but whose cornet-like spray of pheasant feathers entranced her; lunch in the tea-room of Dickinson-Smithers department store; and then, with a bated sense of approaching apocalypse, ten minutes in the rental library.

She settled now, in a cool dress and with a glass of lime freeze, on the porch swing. Fudge cocked an ear at her, remembering the million afternoons his mistress had gone to bed with a book on the couch, instead of playing with him at Shake-the-Furnace-Glove, a delicious game involving the white and blue cotton gauntlet used to bring up the coal.

Bertha must be out, she thought, absently opening her book. (She always sets her ferns out this time of day.) The ferns were nowhere to be seen. Mrs. Klobstock could be heard beating carpets in her back yard, and the strident song of a street car rounding a corner made a faint trajectory over the roofs to Hortense's warm, sweet retreat, where she lay reading *An Angel of Mercy*.

The battlefields were oppressed by sheets of dazzling heat, and men lay putrefying in rags, men lay dead, dying, wounded. On a distant, hazy knoll, the staff officers confused their brains with stained maps. The dogs of war belched behind bush clumps, and miles away, those febrile breaths scorched and exhausted a whole village. But in the midst of this furious misery, a cool balm, a presence like chipped ice sweetened with baby kisses went down the rows of agonized men, and laid a silvery hand upon each dying brow. It was the Angel of Mercy, it was Angelica Vann-Cecill, and Mrs. Schluzer joined her so eagerly in the pages of that novel that five o'clock, and five-thirty came towards her unnoticed. Men walked home from work, such men as photographers and railroad men, in the falling

evening, and Harry was obliged to disturb his wife so that they could have some supper.

She went into the kitchen and pinned on her whitest apron, and then went to the pantry, where she learned over the potato bin, and selected the vegetables with a hand touched by the heavenly current of mercy and healing.

Fifteen from Company K

BY WILLIAM MARCH

(From *The Midland*)

CORPORAL LLOYD SOMERVILLE

ALL the men in our ward were gas patients and all of us were going to die. The nurses knew there was nothing that could be done for us and most of the men realized it too. . . . Three cots away a man lay straining and trying to breathe. Sweat rolled from his face and he caught his breath with a high, sucking sound. After each spell had passed he would lie back, exhausted, and make a bubbling noise with his lips, as if apologizing for disturbing the ward; because each time the man strained for his breath the other men unconsciously struggled with him; and when he lay back exhausted we unclenched our fists and relaxed a little ourselves. I thought, 'That fellow reminds me of a broken down soprano practising her scales. . . .'

A man whose face was turning the colour of wet cement leaned over his cot and commenced vomiting his lungs into a tin bucket. . . . Then the soprano tried again for a high note and I knew that I couldn't stand it any longer. I beat the mattress with my fists and my heart began racing, and I remembered the doctors had said my only chance lay in keeping calm and unexcited. . . .

The night nurse came over to me. She was fat and old, and she walked on the sides of her feet like a tame bear. There was a purple birthmark on her chin. She stood looking down at me helplessly.

'This is pretty God-damned amusing for you, isn't it?' I said. She didn't answer me, and I commenced laughing and crying and shouting at her every filthy thing I had ever heard; but she bent over me slowly and kissed me on the mouth. 'A

big boy like you . . . afraid!' she said scornfully. I took hold of her hand and held it tightly. I could feel my heart slowing down again. My toes uncurled and my legs began to relax. My legs were stiff and numb. They felt as if they had been beaten with a stick.

And so she stood above my bed trying to think of something to do for me. I turned my head and pressed my lips against her palm. I wanted her to know that I was not frightened any more. . . . I looked into her eyes steadily, and smiled; and she smiled back at me. . . . 'I know what will help you,' she said, 'and that's a good stiff shot of cognac.' I said yes, I thought it might. Possibly it did help some: anyway, the ward was emptied and filled again before I finally died.

PRIVATE FREDERICK TERWILLIGER

One night when we were in a quiet sector near Verdun, Sergeant Bartelstone broke me out to go on watch until daylight. When I got to my post, I stood on a firestep and stuck my head above the trench to get a breath of fresh air. I was still grumbling sleepily to myself, I remember, and I yawned just when I stuck my head up. At that moment I felt a sharp pain and my mouth was full of blood. A stray bullet had gone through both my cheeks without hitting my tongue or touching a single tooth.

The doctor back at Base One was certainly a fine man. I told him how it happened and he laughed and slapped his leg. 'You know what I'm going to do for you, kid? I'm going to give you the prettiest pair of dimples in the army!' he said.

I got married not long after getting out of the service. My wife likes a lot of company, so once or twice a week she asks in some of the neighbours to play bridge or just sit around and listen to the radio. One night she had Ernie and Flossie Brecker over and Flossie said: 'It's a shame the Lord didn't give *me* those beautiful dimples, instead of Mr. Terwilliger.'

Flossie Brecker has a long neck and pale blue eyes that pop

out at 'you like a frog's, and suddenly I had a picture of her head raised unexpectedly over the side of a trench. Well sir, I laughed so long I lost count of the cards and had to deal over. My wife said, 'Don't pay any attention to Fred — I wish I had dimples like that too.'

LIEUTENANT EDWARD FRANKEL

I came off watch cold and wet. There was a sour, overpowering smell in the dug-out and it turned my stomach and made me want to vomit. I could feel vermin itching my back and crawling over my chest. I lighted my candle and looked at my dirty hands and my finger nails, caked with muck. 'I'll stand anything else,' I said, 'but I won't stand this filth any longer.' I cocked my pistol and placed it on the shelf beside the candle. . . . 'When it's exactly midnight, I'm going to kill myself.'

On my bed were some magazines that Captain Magee had read and passed on to me. I picked one up at random, and opened it: and there looking at me with sad, pitying eyes was Lillian Gish. Never in my life have I seen anything so pure or so clean as her face. I touched her cheeks with my finger. 'Why, you're clean and lovely . . .' I said in surprise.

I cut out the picture and made a leather case for it, and I carried it with me as long as the war lasted. I used to look at it every night before I went to bed and every morning when I awoke. It took me safely through those terrible months and it brought me out, in the end, calm and undisturbed.

CORPORAL LESLIE JOURDAN

After the war was over I moved to Birmingham, Alabama, and invested in a paint factory the money that my father had left for the completion of my musical education. I met Grace Ellis and she married me. We own our own home and we have three fine, healthy children. We have enough money laid by

in safe bonds to keep us comfortably for the remainder of our lives. All in all I have prospered beyond the average, and Grace, who really loves me, has been happy.

I had almost forgotten that I had ever played the violin at all when one day I ran across Henry Olsen in the lobby of the Tutweiler Hotel. He told me that he was touring the principal cities of the south in a series of concerts and that the critics had given him fine notices wherever he had been. Olsen and I had studied together in Paris, under Olivarria, back in 1916, when we were both kids.

Henry couldn't get over the fact that I'd given up playing the violin. I tried to get him off the subject, but he kept coming back to it and reminding me how Olivarria (he's dead now) used to say that I had more ability than all his other pupils combined and to predict that I was going to be the great virtuoso of my day.

I laughed and tried to change the subject again. I commenced telling him about the way I had prospered in the paint business, but he kept cross-examining me closely and bawling me out for having given up my music until finally I had to do it. I took my hands from my pockets and rested them quietly on his knee. My right hand is as good as it ever was, but shrapnel has wrecked the other one. Nothing remains of my left hand except an elongated thumb and two ragged teats of boneless flesh.

After that Henry and I talked about the paint business and how I had prospered in it until it was time for him to leave for his concert.

PRIVATE WILLIAM ANDERSON

There I was with my foot split open from heel to toe and that doctor at the dressing station thought I'd stand for him sewing it up without anything to deaden the pain except a couple of drinks of cognac. 'I want some sort of an anæsthetic!' I said, and I didn't say it in any uncertain voice, either.

A hospital corpsman tried to tell me that they were almost out of morphine and that they were saving the little they had for officers. Did you ever hear anything so God-damned silly? 'Do you think officers are more delicate than anybody else?' I said. 'Why don't you let everybody draw straws for the morphine? Or make a rule that nobody except blue eyed men under five feet eight are to get it?—Why don't you make some reasonable rule about it?'

Then the doctor said, 'Take that man out and let him lay in the snow for awhile. That'll deaden him up some.'

'By God, I'd like to see you try that once!' I said. 'I'll write a letter to the Major-General Commandant; I'll write a letter to President Wilson — !'

Another doctor whose arms were bloody to his elbows said: 'For Christ sake, give him something and get it over with.' Just when I was feeling numb I raised up and said to the first doctor: 'And by God! you'd better do a first class job on it, too!' The bloody doctor laughed. 'Are you still with us, "Gentle Annie"?' he asked.

'—— Jack!' I said.

SERGEANT ARTHUR CRENSHAW

When I came home the people in my town declared 'Crenshaw Day.' They decorated the stores and the streets with bunting and flags; there was a parade in the morning with speeches afterwards, and a barbecue at Oak Grove in the afternoon.

Ralph R. Hawley, President of the First National Bank and Trust Company, acted as toastmaster. He recited my war record and everybody cheered. Then he pointed to my twisted back and my scarred face, and his voice broke with emotion. I sat there amused and uncomfortable. I wasn't fooled in the slightest. There is an expressive and vulgar phrase which soldiers use on such occasions and I repeated it under my breath.

At last the ceremonies were over and Mayor Couzens, himself, drove me in his new automobile to my father's farm beyond the

town. The place had gone to ruin in my absence. We Crenshaws are a shiftless lot, and the town knows it. The floors were filthy and there was a pile of unwashed dishes in the sink while my sister Maude sat on the step eating an apple and gazing, half asleep, at a bank of clouds. I began to wonder what I could do for a living, now that heavy farm work was impossible for me any more. All that afternoon I thought, and at last I hit on the idea of starting a chicken farm. I got pencil and paper and figured the thing out. I decided that I could start in a small way if I had five hundred dollars with which to buy the necessary stock and equipment.

That night as I lay awake and wondered how I could raise the money, I thought of Mr. Hawley's speech in which he had declared that the town owed me a debt of gratitude for the things I had done which it could never hope to repay. So the next morning I called on him at his bank and told him of my plans and asked him to lend me the money. He was very courteous and pleasant about it, but if you think he lent me the five hundred dollars you are as big a fool as I was.

PRIVATE EDWARD ROMANO

I was out on observation post near Hill 44 and it was raining. There was no wind and the rain fell straight down. To the north there were flashes, like heat lightning along the horizon, and the low growling of distant batteries. As I crouched in the trench, wet to the skin and shivering with cold, I thought: 'It's quiet here to-night, but up to the north terrible things are happening: there, at this moment, men are being torn to pieces, or stabbed to death with bayonets.'

A Very light went up suddenly to break against the sky with a faint kiss, and against its flare I saw the intricate entrenchments of rusting barbed wire. I saw, too, the slow rain gleaming like crystal against the light, and falling in dead, unslanted lines to the field. I lay huddled and trembling in the shallow trench, my rifle pressed against my body. . . . The rain was washing

up the bodies of men buried too hastily, and there was an odour of decay in the air.

I saw a man walking towards me, upright and unafraid. His feet were bare and his beautiful hair was long. I raised my rifle to kill him, but when I saw that it was Christ I lowered it again. 'Would you have hurt me?' He asked sadly. I said yes, and began to talk and curse furiously: 'You ought to be ashamed of Yourself to let this go on! You ought to be ashamed!' . . . He lifted his arms to the sodden field, the tangled wire, and the charred trees like black teeth in a fleshless jaw. 'There's nothing that I can do,' He said. It was then that I commenced to cry and Christ began crying too.

At twelve o'clock my relief came. It was Johnny Townsend, and I wanted to tell him what I had seen, but I knew that he would only laugh at me.

PRIVATE HAROLD DRESSER

The French Government gave me a Croix de Guerre with Palm for crawling out in a barrage and rescuing a wounded French captain and his orderly. That was in April, 1918. Then, in July, I destroyed, single handed, a machine-gun nest that was holding up our advance and killing many of our men, and I got both the Médaille Militaire and the D.S.C. for that. I got the Medal of Honour in October, and this is the way it came about: we were advancing behind our own barrage when the shells commenced falling short, killing some of our men and wounding others. There was no communication by telephone with the batteries, so I volunteered to go back to Regimental Headquarters and report what the artillerymen were doing.

The German line made a deep pocket to our left, so the shortest route to Regimental lay across an open field and straight through the German lines. Captain Magee said I'd never be able to make it through alive, but I thought I could do it, all right, and in ten minutes after I had started I was back at Regimental Headquarters giving them the dope.

After war was over I returned to my old job with the General Hardware Company and I've been there ever since. In my home town people point me out to strangers and say, 'You'd never believe that little fellow had a hat full of medals, would you?' and the strangers always say no, they never would.

PRIVATE PHILIP CALHOUN

I lay excited behind the wall and watched the German artillerymen destroy Marigny. A shell-shocked dog was huddled against the community washhouse. His tail curved under him and the hair on his back was stiff and erect. Water ran from his eyes and his mouth slavered. Occasionally he would spin rapidly in a circle and attempt to bite his tail; then he would stop, exhausted, and snap weakly to right and left; or occasionally he thrust his muzzle to the sky and his jaws opened widely, but the sound was lost in the sound of the shelling.

At last little remained standing in the town except one wall of white limestone. On this wall was a religious print, in a gilt frame, showing a crown of thorns and a bleeding heart from which flames ascended; while beside it, on a wooden peg, hung a peasant's shapeless coat. I lay on my belly and stared at the wall. . . . The shells fell faster and the frightened dog began again to spin and chase his tail. The white wall trembled and a few stones fell, and when I looked up again, the coat had slipped from its peg and lay in the dust like a sprawling, dead bat. . . . Then suddenly the shelling stopped and the silence that followed seemed menacing and terrible. The dog sniffed the air. He lifted his voice and howled.

I got up at once and put on my pack. I walked over to the white wall and stood looking at it curiously. I was glad that it had been spared, and that the sacred picture was in its place. 'Why should that one wall remain?' I thought. But as I stood there adjusting my pack and fumbling with the rusty catch of my cartridge belt, there came a tearing sound and a short report; and down fell the wall in a cloud of dust, smothering the heart

from which flames were ascending and crushing me to death with its weight.

CORPORAL SYLVESTER KEITH

I came out sullen and resentful, determined that such a thing should never happen again. I felt that if people were made to understand the senseless horror of war, and could be shown the brutal and stupid facts, they would refuse to kill each other when a roomful of politicians decided for them that their honour had been violated: so I organized 'The Society for the Prevention of War' and gathered around me fifty young and intelligent men, whose influence, I thought, would be important in the years to come. 'People are not basically stupid or vicious,' I thought; 'they are only ignorant, or ill informed. It's all a matter of enlightenment.'

Every Thursday the group gathered at our meeting place. They asked innumerable questions concerning the proper way to hold a bayonet and the best way to throw hand grenades. They were shocked at the idea of gas attacks on an extended front, and the brutality of liquid fire left them indignant and profane.

I was pleased with myself and proud of my pupils. I said, 'I am planting in these fine young men such hatred of war that when the proper time comes they will stand up and tell the truth without fear or shame.' But someone began organizing a company of National Guard in our town about that time, and my disciples, anxious to protect their country from the horrors I had described, deserted my society and joined in a body.

SERGEANT JACK HOWIE

The people in Beauford treated us fine. They gave us a party that night and all the girls in town were there to dance with us. One of them took a shine to me right off the reel. She was the prettiest girl at the party, too. She had dark eyes and dark curly

hair and her skin was as white as milk. On her left cheek, almost up to her eyebrows, were three brown moles that formed a triangle. The one at the top was a little larger than the other two, but not much. When she saw me she came straight past all the other men and asked me to dance with her. Gee! — I thought I'd fall over backwards.

When I had her in my arms I kept thinking, 'Good Lord, if I gave you a good squeeze you'd break right in two!' . . . I kept stepping on her feet and bumping into her knees, but this little girl said I danced fine. My hands felt as big as skinned pork loins and my uniform seemed too tight for me. . . . Then we went outside and sat in the moonlight and talked. Say, this was the most beautiful girl I ever saw. I thought her eyes were brown at first but they weren't brown at all; they were dark blue. Her hair smelled like violets. I wanted to put my arm around her, but I didn't dare make a break. I kept thinking: 'Gee, what a help you'd be to a man on a farm!' . . .

I don't like to tell this part of it, but after awhile she said: 'You are the handsomest man I have ever seen!' I giggled like a fool. 'Say, what are you trying to hand me, sister?' I asked. She touched my cheek with her hand. 'Will you be my perfect knight, without fear and without reproach?' she asked. I didn't say anything, but this thought crossed my mind: 'She's talking like that because I've got on a uniform. If she had seen me first in dirty overalls working on a farm, she wouldn't so much as speak to me.' I turned away from her, but she pulled my head down and kissed me on the mouth. 'I'll never forget you,' she said, 'and you'll never forget me either.' I took her arms from around my neck. 'Don't be a fool,' I said, 'I won't even remember you to-morrow. . . .'

But all during war times I thought about her and I pictured a thousand times my return to Beauford, to tell her I'd been her knight as well as I knew how, and to show her my medal; but when war was really over I went straight back home and took over the farm. (A swell help *she'd* have been to a man on a farm!) Then I got to going with Lois Schelling and we married soon

after that. We get along fine together. . . . So the girl in Beauford was wrong about my not forgetting her: I can't even remember now what she looked like.

SERGEANT MARVIN MOONEY

One day in the Argonne Forest we came on a wounded German soldier. It was early in the morning and frost had fallen the night before. The German lay huddled on his belly, and he must have been there all night because when I turned him over there was no frost on the place where he had been lying. His face was white and he was shivering. He wore eye glasses with thick, dirty lenses.

When he saw me, he started to beg for a drink of water. I said, 'It was different when you were raping Red Cross nurses and cutting off the legs of children in Belgium, wasn't it? The shoe's on the other foot, now. Here's some of your own medicine!' Then I straightened out his head with my foot and I pounded his face with the butt of my rifle until it was like jelly. After that I opened my canteen and poured all the water I had on the ground, as I didn't want anybody to think it was giving him the water I minded. 'Here's a drink for you,' I said.

If you think I'm lying just ask Luke Janoff and Harry Althouse. They were with me at the time.—He was a crummy little bird and his eye glasses were tied around his ears with two pieces of common twine. He was about five feet six, I should say, although he might have been a little taller than that.

CORPORAL HOWARD VIRTUE

For a week I heard shells falling . . . nothing but shells falling . . . and exploding with blasts that rocked the walls of the dug-out . . . rocking the walls of the dug-out and rattling the frosty duckboards.—I became afraid that I would die before the meaning of my life was made clear. I thought, 'If I use my head, I can get out of this.' I remembered a joke about a man who ran around picking up scraps of paper. After examining each scrap he would discard it quickly and say, 'No, that's not

it!' So the doctors pronounced him mentally incompetent and discharged him from the service. As they handed him his discharge paper the man looked it over carefully to see that everything was in order. Then he smiled at the doctor triumphantly and said, '*That's* it, all right!' 'I'll do the same thing,' I said; 'my life is too valuable to be wasted on a battlefield.' . . . I crawled out over the side of the trench and commenced picking up dead leaves, talking rapidly to myself all the time. Sergeant Dennison came out and coaxed me back to our lines.

Back at the hospital I was afraid that those smart doctors would see through my ruse, but I fooled them too; I was transferred to the United States and later committed to this asylum for lunatics. Here's the irony of the situation: I cannot obtain my freedom although I'm as sane as any man alive.

You are a fair man, let me ask you a question: How can I spread the glory of my cousin, Jesus, and how can I baptise him in the River Jordan from this place where my limbs are shackled? How can I thunder the incestuousness of Herodias, or how submit, at last, when the wanton Salome completes my destiny — shaking her loins for the gift of my head? How can I do these things when my words die flatly against the padding of my cell?

Cymbals clashing and spears and soldiers cursing and casting lots and blood running in rivers from the Poles destroying life and creating life. Rocking! . . . Rocking! . . . And white breasts rosy tipped walking beautifully over ruin and always shells falling . . . nothing but shells falling . . . and exploding with blasts that rock the walls of the dug-out. . . . And I crying in the wilderness. Crying, and nobody to heed me. . . .

I have told them over and over why it is necessary that I be released from this place, but the guards only stare at me and chew gum rhythmically with slow, maddening jaws.

SERGEANT CARROLL HART

Johnny Citron was with me that day we took the machine-gun nest in Veully Wood. We found the crew all killed except

one heavy-set, bearded man, and he was badly wounded. Just as we came up, the bearded man reached inside his tunic and fumbled for something, so I emptied my pistol into him. His arm came away from his coat with a jerking, irregular motion and his palm rested for a moment against his lips. The blood in his throat began to strangle him and he made a gurgling, sighing sound. His eyes rolled back and his jaw fell open.

I went over and opened his palm to see what he had in it. It was the photograph of a little German girl. She was round-faced and freckled and her hair was curled, for the occasion, over her shoulders. 'That must have been his daughter,' said Johnny Citron.

That night I couldn't sleep for thinking of that German soldier. I rolled and pitched about, and toward daybreak Johnny came over and lay down by me. 'Don't blame yourself that way, sergeant,' he said, 'anybody would have thought he was going to throw a grenade.'

PRIVATE JOHN CITRON

Early in June we took over a position in Belleau Wood just evacuated by the Sixth Regiment, who had made an attack that morning. There was a lot of salvage around and a number of letters which had been torn up and thrown away. I pieced a part of one letter together and read it, but I could never find the last page. It was addressed to a man named Francis R. Toleman and it was the most interesting letter I ever read. I carried it around with me for a long time hoping that some day I'd meet this fellow Toleman, but I never did.

If he's alive to-day and reads this, I'd appreciate it if he would write and tell me if he and Milly ever made it up. I'd also like to know what in the world Alice Wilson did to make her own people turn against her that way.

The Other Room

BY DON MARQUIS

(From *Harper's Magazine*)

DR. HARVEY HERBERT was not only an M.D. but a PH.D. His familiars referred to him as a 'psychological shark'; but the world in general did not permit itself such slangy informality. What the world saw was a man who had attained an unusual position at thirty-eight years of age, who was acknowledged to be solid as well as brilliant, and who was spoken of with enthusiasm by his professional and academic brethren.

Doctor Herbert specialized as a neurologist, but his private practice was not large, and it was not easy to get him to take a case unless it had some extraordinary feature which piqued his interest. He lectured on psychology in one of the universities, and he had written extensively on his subject. He was, among other things, a recognized authority upon criminology. He had devoted a great deal of time to the study of hallucinations.

Some strange cases came to the attention of Dr. Harvey Herbert — cases involving very fine ethical points, at times; cases in which a matter of conscience often lay concealed under the surface of some mental trouble, just as a bit of broken needle may work itself through the flesh of the body for years causing physical disturbances difficult to diagnose because its presence is unknown. Doctor Herbert was a rather acutely conscientious person himself.

But with all his exploration of the shadowy caverns of the subconscious mind, no case ever came to the attention of Dr. Harvey Herbert that was stranger than the case of . . . Dr. Harvey Herbert.

*

It was one day last spring that Doctor Herbert called at the surgery of his friend Dr. Howard Vokes, after telephoning to make

sure that Doctor Vokes had time for a lengthy consultation, and dropped into the big chair in front of Vokes' desk, a picture of weariness.

Vokes, a general practitioner and a lifelong comrade, looked at Herbert with keen eyes, noted his fag, and offered him a drink. Doctor Herbert nodded his acceptance.

'Which one of my patients has been sneaking off to you, Harvey?' said Doctor Vokes. 'I don't think I've sent anyone lately.'

'None of them,' said Doctor Herbert. 'I'm here to consult with you about — about myself.'

'Quit drinking,' said Vokes, with a smile, pouring a liberal allowance of whisky into a glass for the famous psychologist. 'Give up smoking,' he went on, pushing his cigarette case towards his friend; 'and have your teeth, tonsils, and appendix taken out at once; take a trip to Bermuda, play golf more, raise violets, eat pineapples, and come back in three days and tell me how you feel.'

But this facetiousness elicited only the feeblest of smiles from his famous friend; Doctor Herbert was twisting his pointed brown beard with his slender fingers, his face and worried eyes averted. Doctor Vokes went on, seriously:

'Stomach, Harvey? Liver? Kidneys? Something in my line?'

'I wish it were,' said Herbert, with a sigh. 'But I'm afraid it's — nerves.'

'Consult the eminent neurologist, Dr. Harvey Herbert,' said Vokes. His remark was really a question as to why the specialist had come to a general practitioner to confer upon a case involving his own specialty; and Doctor Herbert understood it so. He shrugged his shoulders and said in a tired voice:

'I've been to Dr. Harvey Herbert. The man doesn't do me any good.' And then, after a brief pause, 'Howard, you're the oldest friend I have.' He paused again, and resumed, with a smile which made his face very attractive in spite of the ravages of his worry, 'And, with the exception of my wife, about the best one, Howard.'

The two men exchanged that glance of perfect understanding which is so much more eloquent than words. Presently Vokes suggested, 'I suppose you've been down in the sub-cellar of the human mind again, hunting your ghosts — and one of them has turned on you this time.'

'Something like that,' admitted Doctor Herbert.

'You prowl into some queer, dank places,' said Doctor Vokes. 'They almost frighten me.'

'This time,' said Doctor Herbert, 'I was frightened. I still am. I saw. . . .'

His voice trailed off into a brooding silence.

'What did you see?' insisted Dr. Vokes.

'Myself,' said Dr. Harvey Herbert. He shuddered, took another drink, and presently began.

*

I'm hoping that when I'm finished (said Doctor Herbert) you and I may be able to get together and diagnose my case as something physical — but if we can't, at least I will have told everything to a friend. As a psychologist, I can assure you that there is sometimes great value in a sympathetic father confessor. And now that I've said that word, I recognize that I am really coming to you for the assurance of absolution — an assurance that I've not been able to give to myself.

It was about three weeks ago that I got the jolt I'm still staggering from. You remember Aunt Emma Hastings, who lived with us for so many years? Well, it was three weeks ago that Aunt Emma died.

She was distantly related to both my wife and myself, although Margaret and I are not related to each other. Although we both called her Aunt, she was really a second or third cousin of Margaret's grandmother; she was connected, even more remotely, with my mother's father. We were the only people left in the world who could by any stretch of the imagination be called kinsfolk. So we gave her a home, took care of her.

I don't mean that we took care of her financially. She was a great deal better off than I am. I've grubbed for knowledge,

rather than money, as you know; always giving more time to research than to my practice. We took care of Aunt Emma Hastings physically; and not even our best friends have known what a strain it has been or how Aunt Emma tyrannized over us. Entrenched in invalidism, age, sentimentality, the habit of years, she was the very pattern of a petty domestic tyrant. Her death should really be a release and a relief to me; but, for reasons which you will gather, it is anything but that.

The night she died Margaret and I had planned to go to the theatre. We had dined early, and at a couple of minutes after eight o'clock I was waiting in the living room for Margaret, who was putting the finishing touches to her dressing. Getting out to the theatre was more of a treat to Margaret and me than you might suspect, for Aunt Emma had grown increasingly querulous if one or the other, or both of us, were not with her. In fact, for some time we had foregone almost all social diversions.

Margaret came in from her room, her face shining with pleasant anticipation, and I picked up my top-coat and hat. 'Ready at last!' she said, gaily.

But just then Miss Murdock entered. Miss Murdock was Aunt Emma's own attendant — nurse, companion, and maid all at once. There had been a long succession of these companions. Aunt Emma seldom kept one more than six or eight months, and she had had an astonishing variety. But they were all alike in one thing — they seemed to enjoy the tyranny which Aunt Emma exercised over Margaret and myself and to relish the opportunity to participate in it in a minor way. Miss Murdock said, with a prim exterior, but with a certain latent gusto:

'Mrs. Herbert, Miss Hastings sent me to inquire whether you and Doctor Herbert were going out to-night.'

'Why, yes,' said Margaret; 'we're just starting. Does Miss Hastings want anything? I'll go to her if she wishes to speak with me.'

Miss Murdock became a composite picture of the petty malice of all her predecessors as she announced:

'Miss Hastings said, in case I found you were going out, that I was to tell you not to do so.'

'Not to do so!' I exclaimed. I felt a flush of anger, a sudden red rush of it all over me. If my face looked like Margaret's, I showed what I felt. This was a little too much!

'That's what she said,' returned Miss Murdock; and I saw the tip of her tongue run along her lips as if she tasted a creamy satisfaction. 'She said, in case you were going out, you must give up your plans and stay at home.'

With a triumphant glance, Miss Murdock started for the door, but she paused to give us her final thrust. 'Since you will be here with Miss Hastings,' she said, 'I think I'll go out myself.' She left.

Margaret and I sat in silent humiliation for a moment. The anger that had gone all over me seemed to culminate in something that writhed in my head — fluttered and writhed as if a grub were turning to a butterfly all in one instant somewhere among the convolutions of my brain. I rose, with the words forming themselves upon my lips, 'Come on, Margaret, let's get out of here at once — she's gone too damned far this time!'

But I did not utter those words. I saw something, suddenly, that made me pause.

I saw another room, with Margaret and myself sitting in it. Listen carefully, Howard; for just here is the beginning of the train of events that has brought me to you.

I say I saw another room. I should have said I saw the room that we were in, or a part of it — our own living room, and she and I sitting in it, dressed to go out for the evening, just exactly as we were.

I saw it as if I were looking into a mirror, only it was dimmer than that, as if a fine gauze were in front of the mirror. No, not so much a gauze as a light mist, a faint fog. A somewhat denser mist, a heavier fog, made a framework around the finer mist — a framework irregularly oval in shape. And through the medium of the fine mist I looked into a room which was the exact replica of the room in which Margaret and I actually were. I looked into it and saw ourselves there.

Our apartment, as you know, is high up in one of the new buildings on the upper East Side. The east windows of our living room look out over the East River. The apartment, which is large, is one of the corner ones. The north windows of the living room overlook Fifty-Seventh Street.

My first flickering notion, of course, was that I was seeing the actual reflection of our living room in the east windows, as in a mirror. But that comforting thought lasted only the merest fraction of a second.

For I, Dr. Harvey Herbert, was standing up — and the man who looked just like me in the other room beyond the mist was still sitting down!

I sat down myself and covered my eyes with my hands. I have been, as you know, a student of the various phenomena loosely listed as hallucinations. I have had a certain amount of success in my attempts to analyse the mental states back of these phenomena. But I had had no previous experience of a personal nature. And I realized, in the moment that I sat there with my hands over my eyes, that it is one thing to attempt to diagnose the condition of a patient, and another thing to give an answer to one's own problem during the time when it is actively presenting itself. That wriggling grub, about to become a butterfly, was still stirring in my head, trying to flutter his new, feeble wings; and I thought when he went away, as he should in a moment, that would be the end of my aberration.

Margaret spoke, and there was a struggle for kindliness in her voice — a struggle to regain the altitude of forbearance, love and pity, which was usual to her in her relations with Aunt Emma. I knew from her voice that she was not sharing my hallucination with regard to that other room.

'Aunt Emma isn't so well to-night, Harvey,' said Margaret, 'or I'm sure she would have put her request in some other way.'

'Yes,' I replied, trying to imitate Margaret's spirit, trying to conquer the anger that possessed me — and that, no doubt, had brought on my queer vision — 'yes, she's getting pretty old,

and we must remember that she's very fond of us. We'll have to bear with her.'

I had hardly finished speaking when I heard another voice—and it was Margaret's voice, but yet it did not have in it the Margaret I knew. It said:

'She gets more spiteful every day! She knows her power; and the more childish she becomes the more malevolent delight she takes in playing tyrant!'

And then a voice answered — a voice that was my voice, and yet not the voice of any Harvey Herbert I had ever visualized in the full light of consciousness:

'Cheer up, Margaret! It can't last for ever; and if the old hell-cat doesn't change her will before she dies it means fifteen thousand dollars a year for us. That's worth a little trouble, isn't it?'

'A little trouble!' said the voice of the Margaret whom I did not know, with a passionate vibration which I had never heard in the voice of the Margaret I knew. 'You're away, at your surgery or your lectures, most of the time, but I'm here at home with her day and night. A little trouble! It's killing me!'

I took down my hands and opened my eyes. The other room was still there. The Harvey Herbert in it, and the Margaret in it, were on their feet now and were facing each other with a bitterness of face and tone that, surely, my wife and I had never permitted ourselves in any of our rare outbursts of irritation.

The room was still there, but it was not where I had first seen it. I had first looked towards the east wall of our real room, where the windows were that ~~overlooked~~ the East River. Now I was looking towards the north wall, where the windows were that overlooked Fifty-Seventh Street. I turned and looked towards the west wall, which had neither door nor window in it. The other room was there, too. I stepped to the middle of the real room and looked at the south wall, which had two doors in it and no window. The other room was there. I looked above me, and I looked up into it. I looked at the floor, and I stood upon the verge of it, opening below me. And the two figures

were in it, the figures of Margaret and of me, walking and talking independently of us.

Let me tell you just what it looked like again, Howard, so that you can realize something of the effect I got, no matter how I turned my head. A thin, fine mist, and around it, framing it, a denser, heavier mist. Beyond the thin, fine mist, the other room. The opening in the thin, fine mist, framed by the denser, heavier fog, an oval in shape. I walked towards the oval entrance, towards the other room. It receded before me. It kept about ten feet ahead of me. When I turned it was still the same distance ahead of me. I went to one of the windows in the east wall and looked out. The other room was out there in the night, overhanging the water front!

I came back and sat down by Margaret. She was brooding.

'Did you see anything peculiar?' I asked her. She moved her head with a brief negative gesture, without looking at me.

'Or hear anything?' I asked.

'Why, no,' she said. I was sure she had neither seen nor heard. But she looked at me with a glance that was strained and puzzled, as if she had *almost* heard and seen something, if you follow me.

The two people in the other room looked out at Margaret and me with a faint satirical smile upon their faces. I tried to ignore them, thinking maybe they would go away if I could get my mind off them. No matter how much this interested me as a student, at the same time it was distinctly uncomfortable. I said to Margaret:

'What are you thinking of?'

'I was thinking, what a poor lonely old soul Aunt Emma is, Harvey.'

And as if in answer to this, the man in the other room turned to the woman in there and spoke:

'Damn her! She'll live to be a hundred and ten!'

I made a gesture of repudiation — this creature, this vision, this person, whoever or whatever he was — did not speak for me, although he had somehow seized upon my appearance and

my voice. I told myself passionately that I had never thought of Aunt Emma like that! And the man peered out at me with an immense, disconcerting knowingness.

*

I knew that Aunt Emma had come into the room before I saw her. I knew it by the actions of the people in the other room. They leaned forward eagerly, and there was a tense, rapid interchange of low voices:

‘You see,’ said the man, ‘she stumbles!’

‘She totters,’ said the woman; ‘she’s getting weaker!’

Aunt Emma had, indeed, stumbled on the edge of a rug just within the door. Margaret and I ran to her and supported her to a chair and settled her in it. And as we did so, those other voices kept on:

‘She’s not really much weaker. She’ll live for ever!’

‘Perhaps — the mean kind always do!’

Margaret, leaning over Aunt Emma in her big chair, said solicitously: ‘Shan’t I get you a wrap, Aunt Emma?’

Aunt Emma lifted her petulant and sneering face and broke out in her high-pitched, feeble voice:

‘You’re mighty anxious about a wrap, Margaret! But you were thinking of going out and leaving me practically alone — with nobody but Miss Murdock!’

‘But, Aunt Emma,’ I began, reasonably, ‘Miss Murdock is employed to —’

‘Don’t excuse yourself, Harvey!’ she interrupted. ‘Can’t I see you were going out? Can’t I see your evening clothes?’

I could tell by the look Margaret gave me that she was schooling herself to gentleness — as she always did. I tried to imitate her.

Margaret said, ‘Aunt Emma, we’re going to stay with you the rest of the evening — aren’t we, Harvey? We’ll go change to something else.’

‘No!’ cried Aunt Emma. ‘Don’t take off your evening clothes. I don’t want you to! What do you want to take them off for?’

Are they too good for me to see? Ain't I as good as anyone you'd see if you went out? Eh?

'But, Aunt Emma, I meant —'

'I know what you meant! You meant to slip out and leave me alone, both of you! It's lucky I caught you in time! It's lucky I have money of my own. I'd be left alone to starve, if I were poor! I'd die of hunger and neglect!'

Margaret and I looked at each other helplessly. Aunt Emma put her hands in front of her face and began to whimper. Margaret tried to soothe her, to take down her hands and pet her, but Aunt Emma resisted like a spoiled and spiteful child.

In the other room the man murmured:

'This is to be one of Aunt Emma's truly pleasant evenings!'

The woman over there retorted with vehemence, 'This sort of thing happens a dozen times a day!'

I looked over Aunt Emma's shoulder at them. They were regarding Aunt Emma with a frowning intentness.

'She's not really crying,' said the man.

'Preterence!' said the woman. 'She works it up at will.'

'The old hell-cat!'

Aunt Emma lifted her head with a startled look, almost as if she had seen and heard; and a puzzled expression, confused and puzzled, flitted across Margaret's countenance. But neither of them had quite got it; it was for me alone that the full perception of this phenomenon was reserved.

'Aunt Emma,' said Margaret, soothingly; 'you know Harvey and I try to be good to you, don't you?'

'You try to be good to my money!' said Aunt Emma. 'But I may fool you! I may fool you yet! It's not too late to change my will! It's not too late yet to leave it all to charity!'

She spoke with a cunning leer. The man in the other room nudged the woman beside him and said, 'The old cat's capable of doing just that, too, Margaret!'

Aunt Emma lifted to me a disturbed and pitiable face. She took one of my hands, she took one of Margaret's; she took them in both of hers, and she clung to us. For that moment, every-

thing dropped from her except the expression of her dire need — her need to be loved. Her gestures, her manner, were infinitely pathetic. They were a plea for genuine affection. It was as if she had said that she was an isolated human spirit on the brink of the unknown, and that she dreaded the next step which she must take; dreaded it, and must have our understanding, our kindness, to go along with her. What she really said was:

‘Margaret . . . Harvey . . . you really do care for me, don’t you? It isn’t all on account of my money, is it?’

I was profoundly touched. All religion, all life, all art, all expression come down to this: to the effort of the human soul to break through its barrier of loneliness, of intolerable loneliness, and make some contact with another seeking soul, or with what all souls seek, which is (by any name) God. She pleaded and she clung. She said:

‘If you knew I hadn’t a cent, you’d still be good to me, wouldn’t you?’

‘Yes,’ I said eagerly. And, ‘Yes!’ said Margaret. Eagerly, and sincerely. And in that instant I know that both of us were grateful for the patience we had shown to the old woman through the years; grateful that we had been able to rise above our frequent exasperation, to trample it down, and act and speak from worthier impulses.

‘If I lost it all . . . if I told you that I’d lost it all,’ said Aunt Emma, ‘you’d both still be just the same, wouldn’t you?’

‘Yes,’ I said unhesitatingly, still shaken with the vibrations of my emotion and thankful that I was conscious of nothing in me that did not move spontaneously with my answer. ‘Yes,’ I said.

But the man in the other room said to the woman there:

‘My God, you don’t suppose she’s really lost her money, do you?’

‘No!’ answered the woman. ‘This is just one of her cunning spells. She can be as crafty as a witch!’

This, while they looked out of their room at the old woman in her agony! I faced them sternly; I was minded to denounce

them, these figures, whatever they were, that had stolen the outer aspects of me and of my wife and spoke from sentiments we had never acknowledged or acted upon! I was about to cry out to them that they did not represent us, that they were not we. But I did not cry out. Again they turned upon me that faintly satirical smile, those faces informed with an irony drawn from — from what? From some ulterior deep springs of knowledge? I became confused, and did not speak to them.

'I'm hard on you at times,' said Aunt Emma. I have never found it very easy to face expressed sentiment, and now the old woman broke down into a mood that embarrassed me. 'I'm unjust,' she said, and there was no doubt of the genuineness of her contrition. 'I don't mean to be spiteful, but I know I am spiteful. When you get old, you get suspicious of people.' I tried to avert my mind from her self-accusations; it is neither pleasant nor inspiring to witness any sort of dissolution, and she was dissolving into a self-pity that I found it harder and harder to face. 'Suspicion makes us spiteful and unjust — and I'm suspicious of everybody,' she went on. 'Oh, I know I'm not easy to live with, Margaret!'

There wasn't anything to say to that — God knows she wasn't easy to live with! The man and woman in the other room grinned at me with a touch of frank malice. My pity for her, momentarily clouded by my embarrassment at her own self-pity, returned. Presently Margaret said:

'Don't you think you'd better go to bed now, Aunt Emma?'

At that she jerked herself up in the big chair she was sitting in, immediately all suspicion and meanness and snarling petulance again, and spluttered at Margaret:

'To bed? Why to bed? Why do you want to pack me off to bed? Oh, I know!' Her pinched countenance was a mask of cunning malignance as she went on: 'I know why — so you can talk about me, talk me over! So you can speculate on how long I will live! I know you! I know what you talk about when I'm not around. I know what you've been waiting and hoping for the last ten years!'

She began to cry again. She stretched out her arms towards us. Once more there was that terrible appeal in her manner, terrible to witness, terrible to have directed towards one.

'Well, you won't have long to wait now,' she whimpered. 'The time's almost come.' The tears ran down her cheeks in silence for a moment — those daunting, weak tears of the aged who accuse us and the gods because death cannot be delayed so very much longer — and then she said, 'You'll get the money soon enough.'

Distressed, Margaret said, 'There, there, Aunt Emma; you mustn't go on like this.'

'You'll live ten years yet,' I added. It is one of the things one says.

'If I thought she'd live ten years — ' began the man who was peering out from the other room.

'Well?' cut in the woman beside him. 'If you thought she would — what?'

'My God — ten more years like the last ten!' he said.

The woman who looked like Margaret turned upon him fiercely and shot at him a tirade that mounted from step to step of bitterness:

'You see it mornings and evenings; but I have it all day long — and every day! I've had it for ten years. I go nowhere. I see no one. I have no pleasures. I have no friends. I'm losing my youth. I'm losing my looks. Harvey, I'm losing my very soul! I shed my life's blood drop by drop to keep that querulous fool, that dying viper, alive — just merely alive! I'm tired of it — I'm sick of it — I'm wearied, wearied, wearied to the soul! I'm dying from her, I tell you, dying from her!'

She sank to a chair, shaken and pallid; and there came a silent moment. But something — a note that had been struck — the impulsion of occult wings . . . something . . . vibrated in the silence of that moment.

*

I say a moment. But what are moments? What is time? Some theologians, some men of science, say there is no such

thing as time; that we live, always, in eternity. A moment is long, or it is short, because of the stuff that is packed into it. Can we, somewhere in illimitable space, somewhere in the valleys of infinity, catch up with old moments and live them newly again? Well, I do not think we can ever again take out of a moment what we have put into it, even though we should catch up with it again. Am I speaking foolishly, Howard? I want to cling to the moment before . . . before it had occurred . . . before what happened, did happen. I want to. . . .

*

Listen: for all the events of that night I can advance as good a theory as most psychologists. There are rational explanations for the phenomena I witnessed, and was a part of. I know them very well. The man in the other room — I can write you a thesis on who and what he was, and why I saw him and Margaret did not; I can discourse to you, as cleverly as anyone, on every angle of this case.

But it isn't the mechanism of this thing that concerns me now. I am concerned with the things that lie behind the mechanism.

I want to cling to the moment before . . . before it had happened: what did happen. To the moment before what we call the conscience had become involved.

*

Margaret said, 'Come, come, Aunt Emma, you really should go to bed.'

'I won't go to bed,' she said, with the pettishness of a small child. 'I won't go to bed until I've had my medicine. I want my sleeping tablets now.'

'Where are they?' asked Margaret.

'In my bathroom,' said Aunt Emma. And Margaret went out of the room for them.

'See here,' I said to Aunt Emma, 'didn't Miss Murdock give you one of those tablets right after dinner?'

'No,' she said. And then, 'I don't remember. I want one

anyhow! My nerves are on the jump. You've got my nerves to jumping! I'll take one and nap here in the chair.'

The man in the other room said in a low, speculative tone:

'I suppose if one ever gave her the wrong medicine by mistake it would be called by some ugly name.'

The woman answered him: 'People like her never get the wrong medicine given to them by mistake, and never take it by mistake themselves. They live for ever.'

I turned and spoke to them, 'There is a volition in your words,' I said sternly, 'that is not my volition nor my wife's volition.'

'What did you say?' asked Aunt Emma, looking about in bewilderment.

'Nothing,' I answered. The two figures in the other room did not reply to me. They looked at me steadily, levelly.

Margaret returned with a small phial. I took it from her and examined it.

'I'm afraid she had one an hour ago,' I said. 'I don't think it is quite right to let her have another so soon. They are what Dr. McIntosh prescribed, and they have a powerful, depressing effect on the heart if taken in excess.'

As you know, Howard, I did not treat Aunt Emma medically myself — you once had her case until you gave it up — and she has gone from doctor to doctor, always intimating to me that she had little faith in me. That was one of her ways of annoying Margaret and me; but it was no real annoyance, as she did not come within the limits of my specialty.

'You did have one right after dinner, didn't you, Aunt Emma?' said Margaret.

'No! No!' said Aunt Emma. With a sudden monkey-like agility, for which I was not prepared, she reached and snatched the phial from me. She clutched it to her breast, in a childish triumph.

'I didn't have one,' she said. 'I will take one. You don't want me to get to sleep! You don't want me to get any rest! You want me to die!'

Her hands trembled as she hugged the bottle to her; her jaw

chattered, and her lips shook; her victory in getting the bottle had made her all one tremor.

I took hold of her hands, and tried to take the phial away from her gently. She grasped it with her crooked claws until white spots showed on the knuckles, and rocked herself back and forth. Her fingers were interlaced about it.

'See here, Aunt Emma,' I said; 'you musn't be stubborn about this. I think you did have a tablet right after dinner, and another one now might be dangerous.'

I used a certain amount of force, and she whimpered and actually gnashed her teeth at me. Margaret interposed:

'Don't struggle with her, Harvey. Doctor McIntosh says the least strain is likely to prove fatal.'

I knew that was true, and released her hands. She had had a dilated heart some years previously, from which she had never really recovered. Emotional strain as well as physical strain was dangerous.

'You want me to die so you can get my money,' she said, leering up at me from under her thin white eyebrows.

Tentatively, I reached my hand towards her again. She suddenly grasped it and sank her teeth into it. And then she pulled the cork from the phial.

I was in a quandary as to the right thing to do. If I struggled with her, I should almost certainly kill her. On the other hand, I was not absolutely certain whether she had taken one of the tablets previously or not. She had said she hadn't. I had heard Miss Murdock speak of giving her one; but I hadn't actually seen her take it. I wasn't sure.

I didn't know then what I should have done. And I did the wrong thing — I did nothing. It is easy enough now, Howard, to see that it was the wrong thing. It is easy enough now to say that I should have risked the struggle, risked killing her by the struggle. But I put it to you, man to man, how was I to know then that it was the wrong thing?

She shook two tablets from the bottle and put both of them into her mouth.

'Not two, Aunt Emma!' I cried. I actually tried to take them from her mouth, and I got myself bitten again.

The situation was now changed, in a way that no one could have foreseen.

Two tablets within the hour might not kill her; but three almost certainly would.

'Aunt Emma,' I said, 'you didn't have one before, did you?'

She had closed her eyes and sunk back into the chair, after swallowing the two tablets, as if thoroughly exhausted by such struggle as there had been. Now she opened them again, and looked up at me with a look indescribably impish — impish and foolish, and puerilely triumphant. She rocked herself from side to side, and she said:

'Yes!' And then, 'I've had three, now, and I'm going to sleep — you hate me — you both hate me — but you can't keep me from going to sleep.'

And she leaned back in the chair again.

'I don't believe she did have three of them,' said Margaret. 'She's only saying that now to worry us.'

'She says she did,' I returned; 'but she doesn't know. I think you're right — she's probably only saying it to irritate us. I know she didn't.'

She opened her eyes a little, opened and closed them, with a blink of cunning.

'You know I did!' she murmured.

I hadn't known it — hadn't been sure of it — but evidently the man and woman in the other room had been sure of it.

'She did have one before,' said he.

'Yes,' said the woman; 'I know she did.'

Margaret and I stood and looked down on the old woman, whose shaking agitation was now leaving her, who had now begun to breathe quite quietly, in a condition that was strangely helpless; in a sort of suspension of the will-power. I can think now of several things that I should have done. But I give you my word, I could think of nothing then; the only thing that filled my consciousness then was the desperate, working hope

that she would not die. And while I looked down on Aunt Emma's silent and shrunken figure I heard the man and woman in the other room speaking. Their voices were cool and quiet; they came to me clearly enough, but they seemed to come from a distance, too.

'Will she die?' said the man. 'Shall I see her die?'

'I should hate to look on while she died,' said the woman.

'But she will die; she is dying and I am looking on.'

'She was very old.'

'She was very old. She will be better dead.'

'She has not died yet.'

'She is breathing very quietly. Old people breathe very quietly.'

'Old people die very quietly.'

'And she is dying.'

I heard this monstrous litany, and every fibre in my being was in revolt against it. But, for a time, it seemed impossible for me to speak or to move. I tried to combat, in my own mind, what they were saying in the other room.

Aunt Emma stirred, feebly. Her eyes said that she wanted to say something. Margaret and I bent over her, and she whispered faintly:

'Margaret . . . Harvey . . . you . . . you really love me . . . don't you? You really . . . really. . . .'

She relapsed, relaxed. Her head was slightly on one side. She did not speak or move again.

Margaret said, with a note of alarm, 'Harvey, she's scarcely breathing! She does not seem to be breathing at all!'

'If I had struggled with her,' I said, 'it would have killed her.'

The man in the other room spoke, 'And now she's dead because there was no struggle!'

Margaret cried out, 'Phone for Doctor McIntosh! I'm alarmed!'

'Too late for any doctor,' said the man in the other room; and the woman there echoed, 'Too late!'

Margaret said to me, 'Harvey, I'm afraid . . . I'm afraid that Aunt Emma has left us!'

'Thank heaven,' I answered, 'that we've always tried to be good to her. You've been like an angel to her, Margaret, and I've tried to do my best. Poor Aunt Emma!' For the pathos of her last words clutched at my heart. 'Poor Aunt Emma!' I said. Somehow I could not stop saying it for a moment; I chattered it over and over again, 'Poor Aunt Emma! Poor Aunt Emma! Poor Aunt Emma!'

'Fifteen thousand a year! Fifteen thousand a year! Fifteen thousand a year!' chattered the man in the other room.

I turned angrily and faced him. I wanted to have it out with him.

For he was not I! Oh, I know what had happened — any man in my profession knows what had happened! In that other room I was seeing my other self. The part we all hide and deny, the ungenerous part, the selfish part, the hideous part if you will, had come up out of the caves of the underworld, out of the realm of the unexpressed, out of the repressed subconsciousness, and met me face to face. I need not dwell, in talking with you, on the mechanism of it — as I have said, the mechanism interested me far less than the things behind the mechanism. The man in the other room was compounded of all the unuttered things in my nature which I consciously disavowed, which I fought down, which I never permitted to get into the field of fact and deed. We have all fought them down or there would be no such thing as civilization to-day, not even the imperfect semblance of it which exists.

But I cried out within myself, and I cry out to you now, Howard, that the man in the other room was not and is not the real I! But he was saying that he was! He was claiming to be! It was his will that had triumphed here, for he had willed the old woman's death; while I, the conscious I, had fought against it.

I cried out and I still cry out against the monstrous injustice that he should be able to make the conscious I feel guilty because of a thing that was his doing! Are all the years when I was consciously kind, in spite of my exasperation, to count for nothing — all the years in which I fought down my irritation, all the

years in which Margaret had acted, as I told her, like an angel? We had had our ungenerous thoughts, our angers, our selfish impulses; but we had trampled them under our feet, and was that fight, that struggle, that victory, to be as if it had never been? Was not the better part of us, whose deeds were gentle and considerate, to be accepted as the real individual, the real ego? Were these cold and selfish usurpers to be able to pretend that they were we? Able to make us feel that, guiltily? Is the fight towards decency, after it has been won, after its victory has been sealed and signalized by deed and fact, to be lost again merely because of the sneering assertion of these creatures who come bursting up out of the unplumbed depths of life? Are the whispers and nods and looks of those cave men to impose on us and make us think that we are cave men again? I protested, and I protest, that this cannot be! It is not merely my own case that I have brought you, Howard; it is the case of all men, of all humanity.

I turned angrily towards the man in the other room with this protest rising to my lips. But again I was stopped from speaking. He was gazing down on the big chair in his room. Aunt Emma was in it — over there in the other room, beyond the mist. Her eyes were open, and she was looking out at me. On her face was the same faintly satirical smile as on the faces of the other two people in that room.

Margaret was bending over the big chair in our room, weeping. Aunt Emma, from the other room, gazed on Margaret's attitude with something like ironic amusement.

*

Doctor Vokes was silent for several minutes after Dr. Harvey Herbert paused in his narrative. Then he said, 'No, the case is scarcely in my line.'

'Nor in mine,' said Doctor Herbert. 'When I have considered everything that comes within the province of the psychologist, the essence of it all escapes me — the thing behind the thing.'

'Why should a sense of guilt cling to you?' said Doctor Vokes.

‘That sense should belong to the man in the other room. Can’t you make him take it and keep it, and dive down with it into whatever strange and shadowy hell he came up out of?’

‘He won’t stay down there,’ said Doctor Herbert simply, and with a despairing gesture. ‘He keeps coming up again, asserting himself.’

There was another silence; presently Doctor Vokes said, ‘And his assertion —’ He hesitated; then murmured, ‘I suppose it turns upon the fact that, after all, he spoke and acted with a direct and vigorous candour.’

Dr. Harvey Herbert repeated his gesture.

‘I have thought several times I was rid of him,’ he said; ‘but he keeps coming back. To-day I knew certainly that I was not rid of him. I discovered it when I found myself arranging with my lawyer to turn over Aunt Emma’s fifteen thousand a year to a charity, a home for old ladies.’

‘You did that?’

‘Yes. For a few moments after the transfer was completed I felt a relief. And then there floated in front of me the face of the man who had been in the other room, with a quizzically sarcastic grin upon his lips. The expression said he knew just why I could never touch any of Aunt Emma’s money — he knew, that grin said.’

A Pretty Cute Little Stunt

BY GEORGE MILBURN

(From *The American Mercury*)

I

WELL, R.A., I wish you could of been out to Rotary to-day. You certainly missed a treat. They pulled off a pretty cute little stunt, and I'm right here to tell you it would of give you something to think about, you old potwalloper, you!

Well, sir, it was a pretty cute little stunt the way they pulled it off. Just as slick as you please. The way it happened, the Chief called me up on the phone about 11.30 and says, 'Harry, we've got a bum in jail down here, and he claims that he's an old ex-member of Rotary. He's been aggravating the life out of us, telling us that he's got a message that he's got to get to you boys some way.'

The first thing that occurred to me was that it was some kind of a joke. You know how the Chief is, yourself, R.A., always up to some kind of monkey business. Sure you do, though, because I remember how the Chief helped pull that fake pinch on you at the station last year, the day you and Alice was starting on your honeymoon. Handcuffed you right there as the train was starting up, and Alice sticking her head out the window, yelling and crying when the train pulled out. I thought I'd a died laughing at the look on your face that day, the way you sputtered when the Chief snapped on those bracelets. And that flabbergasted look of yours all the way on the road when we was hitting around seventy trying to get you to the next station in time to catch up with your missus!

It took you quite a while to catch on to the joke. And, come to think of it, R.A., I don't think Alice ever has acted the same toward we boys since that day she lost her temper. Well, I thought they was carrying the joke a little too far, myself, but I never saw a woman yet that could take a joke in the proper

spirit. The way she turned loose on the Chief when we finally caught the train! I mean Alice ought to of seen that the Chief was just helping we boys kid you a little. I mean the Chief was only doing like we asked him to.

But to get back to what I was telling you, I thought to myself, 'This is just some horseplay the Chief's pulling off.' So I says to him, 'Oh, yeah?' You know. Like that. 'Oh, yeah?'

The Chief didn't let on a bit, though. He was just as serious as he could be. He says, 'Yes, he's got the Rotary button and the credentials, but of course he could of stole those some place. But he tells a pretty straight story, and if you've got time, I wish you'd come down to the station and take a look at him.'

Well, just as soon as I saw that the Chief was serious, I quit kidding right away. I says, 'Sure thing, Chief, I'll be right down.' So I hung up and got in my Chivy and drove right on down to the station.

I wish you could of seen this bird the Chief come leading out, R.A. Dirty as rot and looked like he didn't have a shave in a week. He had on an old, worn-out-looking blue serge suit, all out at the sleeves, and it looked like he didn't have on any shirt, because he had his coat collar turned up and pinned at the neck with a safety pin.

I was still kind of leery when I walked into the station, but I didn't have no more doubts after I saw this bum the Chief come leading out. He was a little short fellow that looked like he might of seen better days in his time. But it certainly looked like it had been many a day since he had. I mean he had a pretty good-sized stomach on him and he was wearing horn-rim glasses, but I wish you could of seen the way he looked. He just had down-and-outer written all over him.

The Chief introduced us, and I shook hands with him. Then he started in to explaining how he had been sitting there in his cell thinking about things, and how good-for-nothing he had got to be. Then he said he just happened to remember that, a little while before the police picked him up, he had seen one of our Rotary-wheel signboards with 'Rotary meets on Mondays

— Visitors welcome' on it. Well, the long and the short of it was that he said that he had used to be a Rotarian before he went to the dogs, and he just got to thinking that he would like to meet with the boys again and give them a talk.

He showed me his credentials, they were so dirty and worn I couldn't hardly make out the writing, and his button. He wasn't wearing his button. He was just carrying it in his pocket.

I could see that his feelings were working on him pretty strong. I looked to see him break down and start crying any minute. He was so pitiful I just didn't know what to do about him. But at the same time, I began to wonder what the boys would think if I was to come walking in with a filthy bum like that to eat with us. You'd have to of seen him to appreciate it. He looked like something somebody had drug up the streets with. Well, I knew that I'd have to decide something quick. It was getting close to noon then. So I says to him, 'You wait here just a minute.' I steps over to the 'phone and calls up Gay Harrison, the secretary.

'Gay,' I says, 'what have we got on the programme to-day?'

'Not a thing that I know of, Harry,' Gay says, 'Why?'

'Well,' I says, 'the Chief's got a bum in jail down here that claims he's an old former ex-Rotarian, and this bum wants to come up and eat with us to-day, and then give us a talk after we eat. What's your reaction?' I says.

Gay fell right in with the notion. He says, 'Harry, that strikes me as being a pretty cute little stunt. Bring him right along!'

And I want to say it *was* a pretty cute little stunt, too.

I went back in to where the bum was standing by the desk, waiting. I hadn't quite caught his name, so I says to him, 'I didn't quite catch what your name was, buddy.'

'Just call me Oscar,' he says. 'That's the old Rotary spirit.'

I kind of grinned when he said that, but when I looked at him, just as solemn as a judge when he said it, I didn't lose any time wiping that grin right off my face. I felt kind of ashamed, R.A. I mean the way he looked at me made it seem kind of heathenish to grin at Rotary spirit like that, R.A.

I turned around to the Chief and said, 'Chief, I guess you haven't got any objection, have you, if I took Oscar to Rotary with me to-day.'

The Chief didn't crack a smile. He said, 'Well, Harry, it's a little irregular, but if I go along to keep him in custody, I guess it'll be all right. I mean we've got him booked on a vag charge here, you see, and we'd be held liable for him.'

Before we started out, though, I looked the bum right straight in the eye and says, 'Before we start, though, Oscar, I want it distinctly understood that there's to be no begging for alms done. The boys wouldn't stand for that. We're glad to have you come eat with us, and to hear your message — but no begging speech, remember that.'

The bum kind of drew himself up and says, 'Why, of course I have no intention of begging for alms. Of course not. That wouldn't be Rotary,' he says. And somehow or other he made me feel pretty cheap again, the way he said that, 'It wouldn't be Rotary.'

II

Well, the upshot of it was, we all piled into my Chivy sedan, the Chief and the bum and me, and drove right up to the Hotel Beckman just like we was a delegation of millionaires. I wished you could of seen that big nigger doorman they got there at the Beckman, R.A., when we come piling out of my Chivy. That nigger's eyes just bulged out like stoppers on an organ. I'd give a pretty to know what he was thinking.

When we walked through the lobby I could see ever'one craning to get a look at us, and when we come into the dining-room they had already started eating. But ever'one put down their knife and fork when we walked up and took our seats at the speakers' end of the table. They didn't know what to make of it.

And I wished you could of seen that fellow lay away the grub. He ate like he was half-starved. He just ate up everything in sight and was ready for more before anybody else had got good

and started. Ever'body was staring down in our direction, and I was turning about seven different colours. I couldn't hardly eat, myself, and I was kicking myself for a sucker all through the meal.

After the meal Gay Harrison got up and said, 'I don't believe there are any visitors to-day, so we'll proceed with the business.' Some of the boys began clearing their throat and laughing a little, and I want to tell you I was about ready to sink right through that floor. Then Gay says, 'Oh, I beg pardon. Harry has a guest. Harry, will you introduce your guest.'

I could of kicked Gay around the block for the way he said that, but I saw then that I was going to have to go on through with it, so I gets up and kind o' grins, and says, 'Well, boys, this was all about as big a surprise to me as it was to you. And Gay there is letting on like he didn't know nothing about it, but he knows just as much as I do. About 11.30 I got a telephone call from the Chief saying that he had an old ex-Rotarian in jail, and that this fellow thought he had a message for us. I called up Gay and he said it would be all right. So I want to introduce Oscar,' I says, 'and if he'll get up now he can do his own explaining.'

I sat down, and this bum, just as ragged and dirty as a Turk, stood up. The boys clapped for him, but they was all about to bust laughing. This bum just kind of looked around over the table, and it got still enough so as you could of heard yourself think. You talk about magnetism, R.A., well that man had it. He used psychology on them. Nobody there knew any more about him than I did, but he stopped that laughing, don't you forget it.

I wish you could of heard that man talk. He started right in.

'Boys,' he says, 'you don't know me, and I guess none of you care very much who I am, or what I was once upon a time. And I'm not going to dwell on that,' he says. 'I came into your fair city unannounced and I'll be lucky if I can go out the same way,' he says. 'The way you see me now,' he says 'I'm on the dog, just a poor down-and-outer. But,' he says, 'I'm not here to

play on your sympathies. I just want to talk to you a little about Rotary fellowship, and then I'm through,' he says.

'This morning I was sitting in my jail cell meditating,' he says. 'You know that's one thing about being in jail, you get a chance to do a lot of meditating,' he says. And then he went on to describe about how the early disciples of the Church had all spent a lot of time in jail, and about how that had give them time to do a lot of meditating, and that had a lot to do with the purity and inspiration of their message, and so on and so forth. Well, R.A., it seems like he was setting there meditating and all of a sudden he got this inspiration that if he could just give a talk to Rotary once more, he had a message for them that was worth hearing.

'I used to be a member of Rotary in good standing,' he says. 'I'm not going to say where it was, because that don't make any difference,' he says. And then he talked a little more and went on and recited that poem, you know that poem that goes

'I want to live in the house beside of the road,
And see the men go by,
The men who. . . .'

Well, I don't remember now just how it goes, something like that, but anyhow it ends up:

'I want to live in the house beside the road,
And be a friend of man.'

This bum recited the whole poem from start to finish, and when he got through, he says, 'Now, that poet had it all wrong,' he says, 'because that's not Rotary. To be in keeping with Rotary you have to get out in the middle of the road, and live out in the middle of the road. You've got to be out in the middle of the road *meeting* with men and *mixing* with men, if you're going to be a friend of man,' he says. 'This old setting down beside of the road watching men go past won't do at all,' he says.

Well, R.A., his talk was just full of sharp little points like that,

and they hit home, too. A pretty cute little stunt, I want to say.

Another place there he went on and told about how in a town where he had been a Rotarian one time Rotary had taken all the kiddies in town, all the poor kiddies, out on an outing out in the woods. Well, he was a respectable business man back in those days, and he was getting around among the kiddies, seeing that they all had a good time, and he come across a little cripple boy standing over by a tree just crying like his heart would break.

He went up to this little cripple boy and says, 'What's the matter, sonny?'

And the little cripple boy sobbed out, 'Oh, I can't have any fun. All the other kids can go around and get red lemonade and ice cream cones and hot dogs and ever'thing, but I can't. I'm crippled.'

About that time he looks up and he sees a big strapping boy coming up, and he sneaks around on the other side of the refreshment tent to see what this big boy is going to say to this little cripple.

Well, the big boy come up and says, 'What's eatin' yuh, kid?' And the little cripple starts crying again, and the big boy says, 'Aw, shucks! Come on here and get up on my back.' And he stooped over and got the little cripple up on his back and pretty soon he was loping him all over the picnic ground, handing him up soda pop and hot dogs and ever'thing and the little cripple was having just as good a time as anybody.

R.A., I'm right here to tell you that when that ragged bum finished that story ever'one around that table was a sniffing and a snubbing and making dabs at their eyes and trying to grin and make out like they wasn't crying at all. If any speaker ever had magnetism, that man certainly had it. The way he used that psychology on them wasn't even funny.

Well, he finished up by saying that all his message was that if he could just get us to live a little more like the Master Rotarian, and follow in His footsteps, his mission would be fulfilled, and,

even if he was a ragged bum, he would have done something worth while.

He says, 'Now, boys, you're going to forget me. I'm just a ragged old bum, and I'm going to pass out of your lives. But the idea of fellowship is what I wanted to get across to-day. The bums and the jailbirds need the grip of a manly hand sometimes. Fellowship, that's all!'

He says, 'Now I know what a lot of you boys been thinking I've been leading up to, but you're wrong. I'm not going to make any plea for money, or for aid of any kind. If you was to offer it to me, I wouldn't take your money. Because that wouldn't be Rotary. But just remember what I told you about fellowship, and try and be a little more like that Master Rotarian of long ago.'

Then he turned around quick and says to the Chief in a kind of tired-out voice, 'Come on, Chief, let's be going.'

The Chief got up and took him by the arm, and they had almost got to the door when old Cliff Oliphant — you know old Cliff, R.A., just as kind-hearted as they make them — jumped up with his eyes streaming tears and began trying to say something.

Well, the whole place was in a hubbub, and I guess they would of passed the hat, if Gay Harrison hadn't stood up about that time and started to tapping on a glass with his knife. 'Hold on just a minute, boys,' Gay says. 'Hold on there just a minute.'

And then he beckoned to the Chief, and the Chief come leading the bum back to the head of the table.

'Boys,' Gay says, 'I want to introduce you to the Reverend Oscar D. Sneathen, pastor of the First Christian Church over at Garden City.'

The bum reached up and undid the safety pin at his coat collar and threw back his ragged old coat and showed that he had on a collar and tie and a suit just as good as any of us!

III

Well, R.A., we all just sat around and goggled and nobody could say a word. It was a regular shock to us to find out that

this ragged bum had been a respectable minister of the gospel all along.

And the funny part about it was, none of us suspicioned anything right up to the last. Nobody but Gay and the Chief had been in on the know. It fooled ever'one of us.

I mean, there we was, all ready to show our fellowship to this ragged bum, and shell out some coin if we had to make him take it, and it kind of hit us when we found out he couldn't use our money. But he certainly got his message across. It was a clever little stunt, just as cute as it could be.

Gay made a little talk, telling how the Reverend Sneathen had been going around over the State pulling this stunt at Rotary luncheons, and asked us not to give it away to no one, as that might spoil the effect somewheres else.

It done a lot of good, too, even if it was just a trick. I was talking to Otis Bailey, riding back to the office after it was all over, and he says to me, 'You know, Harry, that bum had it just about right, after all. We've got to get back to fundamentals in this country. After all, a bum is just a human being like us.'

Otis said he wasn't in favour of any new experimenting in this country, like this Dole's System and so on. But he said his point was that we couldn't just let these bums starve.

I told him, 'Sure, Otis, sure. And the way I look at it, that's right where some of this fellowship the speaker was talking about is going to go a long ways toward solving the situation.'

So that just goes to show you, R.A., how a clever little stunt like that can be a big inspiration by getting people to discussing a question.

To get back to what I come to see you about, though, R.A.: Reverend Sneathen is going around over the State putting on this little stunt at Rotary luncheons, and he's out quite a little expense for travelling expenses and so on. Gay told me to draw \$25 out of the entertainment fund for him, but there was only \$3.65 left in the treasury after we sent that marble-contest kid to New Jersey to the finals last month. So we're asking the boys all to chip in a dollar or so apiece for the reverend.

It's a pretty cute little stunt he pulls off all right. I wish you could of been there. I mean it would of give you something to think about, R.A. Well, R.A., give me a ring when it's anything in the insurance line.

Here We Are

BY DOROTHY PARKER

(From *Cosmopolitan*)

THE young man in the new blue suit finished arranging the glistening luggage in tight corners of the Pullman compartment. The train had leaped at curves and bounced along straightaways, rendering balance a praiseworthy achievement and a sporadic one; and the young man had pushed and hoisted and tucked and shifted the bags with concentrated care.

Nevertheless, eight minutes for the settling of two suitcases and a hat-box is a long time.

He sat down, leaning back against bristled green plush, in the seat opposite the girl in beige. She looked as new as a peeled egg. Her hat, her fur, her frock, her gloves were glossy and stiff with novelty. On the arc of the thin, slippery sole of one beige shoe was gummed a tiny oblong of white paper, printed with the price set and paid for that slipper and its fellow, and the name of the shop that had dispensed them.

She had been staring raptly out of the window, drinking in the big weathered signboards that extolled the phenomena of codfish without bones and screens no rust could corrupt. As the young man sat down, she turned politely from the pane, met his eyes, started a smile and got it about half done, and rested her gaze just above his right shoulder.

'Well!' the young man said.

'Well!' she said.

'Well, here we are,' he said.

'Here we are,' she said. 'Aren't we?'

'I should say we were,' he said. 'Eeyop. Here we are.'

'Well!' she said.

'Well!' he said. 'Well. How does it feel to be an old married lady?'

'Oh, it's too soon to ask me that,' she said. 'At least — I mean. Well, I mean, goodness, we've only been married about three hours, haven't we?'

The young man studied his wrist watch as if he were just acquiring the knack of reading time.

'We have been married,' he said, 'exactly two hours and twenty-six minutes.'

'My,' she said. 'It seems like longer.'

'No,' he said. 'It isn't hardly half past six yet.'

'It seems like later,' she said. 'I guess it's because it starts getting dark so early.'

'It does, at that,' he said. 'The nights are going to be pretty long from now on. I mean. I mean — well, it starts getting dark early.'

'I didn't have any idea what time it was,' she said. 'Everything was so mixed up, I sort of don't know where I am, or what it's all about. Getting back from the church, and then all those people, and then changing all my clothes, and then everybody throwing things and all. Goodness, I don't see how people do it every day.'

'Do what?' he said.

'Get married,' she said. 'When you think of all the people, all over the world, getting married just as if it was nothing. Chinese people and everybody. Just as if it wasn't anything.'

'Well, let's not worry about people all over the world,' he said. 'Let's don't think about a lot of Chinese. We've got something better to think about. I mean. I mean — well, what do we care about them?'

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'I know,' she said. 'But I just sort of got to thinking of them, all of them, all over everywhere, doing it all the time. At least, I mean — getting married, you know. And it's — well, it's sort of such a big thing to do, it makes you feel queer. You think of them, all of them, all doing it just like it wasn't anything. And how does anybody know what's going to happen next?'

'Let them worry,' he said. 'We don't have to. We know darn well what's going to happen next. I mean. I mean — well, we know it's going to be great. Well, we know we're going to be happy. Don't we?'

'Oh, of course,' she said. 'Only you think of all the people, and you have to sort of keep thinking. It makes you feel funny. An awful lot of people that get married, it doesn't turn out so well. And I guess they all must have thought it was going to be great.'

'Come on, now,' he said. 'This is no way to start a honeymoon, with all this thinking going on. Look at us — all married and everything done. I mean. The wedding all done and all.'

'Ah, it was nice, wasn't it?' she said. 'Did you really like my veil?'

'You looked great,' he said. 'Just great.'

'Oh, I'm terribly glad,' she said. 'Ellie and Louise looked lovely, didn't they? I'm terribly glad they did finally decide on pink. They looked perfectly lovely.'

'Listen,' he said. 'I want to tell you something. When I was standing up there in that old church waiting for you to come up, and I saw those two bridesmaids, I thought to myself, I thought, "Well, I never knew Louise could look like that!" Why, she'd have knocked anybody's eye out.'

'Oh, really?' she said. 'Funny. Of course, everybody thought her dress and hat were lovely, but a lot of people seemed to think she looked sort of tired. People have been saying that a lot, lately. I tell them I think it's awfully mean of them to go around saying that about her. I tell them they've got to remember that Louise isn't so terribly young any more, and they've got to expect her to look like that. Louise can say she's twenty-three all she wants to, but she's a good deal nearer twenty-seven.'

'Well, she was certainly a knock-out at the wedding,' he said. 'Boy!'

'I'm terribly glad you thought so,' she said. 'I'm glad someone did. How did you think Ellie looked?'

'Why, I honestly didn't get a look at her,' he said.

'Oh, really?' she said. 'Well, I certainly think that's too bad. I don't suppose I ought to say it about my own sister, but I never saw anybody look as beautiful as Ellie looked to-day. And always so sweet and unselfish, too. And you didn't even notice her. But you never pay attention to Ellie, anyway. Don't think I haven't noticed it. It makes me feel just terrible. It makes me feel just awful, that you don't like my own sister.'

'I do so like her!' he said. 'I'm crazy for Ellie. I think she's a great kid.'

'Don't think it makes any difference to Ellie!' she said. 'Ellie's got enough people crazy about her. It isn't anything to her whether you like her or not. Don't flatter yourself she cares! Only, the only thing is, it makes it awfully hard for me you don't like her, that's the only thing. I keep thinking, when we come back and get in the apartment and everything, it's going to be awfully hard for me that you won't want my own sister to come and see me. It's going to make it awfully hard for me that you won't ever want my family around. I know how you feel about my family. Don't think I haven't seen it. Only, if you don't ever want to see them, that's your loss. Not theirs. Don't flatter yourself!'

'Oh, now, come on!' he said. 'What's all this talk about not wanting your family around? Why, you know how I feel about your family. I think your old woman — I think your mother's swell. And Ellie. And your father. What's all this talk?'

'Well, I've seen it,' she said. 'Don't think I haven't. Lots of people they get married, and they think it's going to be great and everything, and then it all goes to pieces because people don't like people's families, or something like that. Don't tell me! I've seen it happen.'

'Honey,' he said, 'what is all this? What are you getting all angry about? Hey, look, this is our honeymoon. What are you trying to start a fight for? Ah, I guess you're just feeling sort of nervous.'

'Me?' she said. 'What have I got to be nervous about? I mean. I mean, goodness, I'm not nervous.'

'You know, lots of times,' he said, 'they say that girls get kind of nervous and yippy on account of thinking about — I mean. I mean — well, it's like you said, things are all so sort of mixed up and everything, right now. But afterwards, it'll be all right. I mean. I mean — well, look, honey, you don't look any too comfortable. Don't you want to take your hat off? And let's don't ever fight, ever. Will we?'

'Ah, I'm sorry I was cross,' she said. 'I guess I did feel a little bit funny. All mixed up, and then thinking of all those people all over everywhere, and then being sort of 'way off here, all alone with you. It's so sort of different. It's sort of such a big thing. You can't blame a person for thinking, can you? Yes, don't let's ever, ever fight. We won't be like a whole lot of them. We won't fight or be nasty or anything. Will we?'

'You bet your life we won't,' he said.

'I guess I will take this darned old hat off,' she said. 'It kind of presses. Just put it up on the rack, will you, dear? Do you like it, sweetheart?'

'Looks good on you,' he said.

'No, but I mean,' she said, 'do you really like it?'

'Well, I'll tell you,' he said. 'I know this is the new style and everything like that and it's probably great. I don't know anything about things like that. Only I like the kind of a hat like that blue hat you had. Gee, I liked that hat.'

'Oh, really?' she said. 'Well, that's nice. That's lovely. The first thing you say to me, as soon as you get me off on a train away from my family and everything, is that you don't like my hat. The first thing you say to your wife is you think she has terrible taste in hats. That's nice, isn't it?'

'Now, honey,' he said, 'I never said anything like that. I only said——'

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'What you don't seem to realize,' she said, 'is this hat cost twenty-two dollars. Twenty-two dollars. And that horrible old blue thing you think you're so crazy about, that cost three ninety-five.'

'I don't give a darn what they cost,' he said. 'I only said — I said I liked that blue hat. I don't know anything about hats. I'll be crazy about this one as soon as I get used to it. Only it's kind of not like your other hats. I don't know about the new styles. What do I know about women's hats?'

'It's too bad,' she said, 'you didn't marry somebody that would get the kind of hats you'd like. Hats that cost three ninety-five. Why didn't you marry Louise? You always think she looks so beautiful. You'd love her taste in hats. Why didn't you marry her?'

'Ah, now, honey,' he said. 'For heaven's sakes!'

'Why didn't you marry her?' she said. 'All you've done, ever since we got on this train, is talk about her. Here I've sat and sat and just listened to you saying how wonderful Louise is. I suppose that's nice, getting me all off here alone with you, and then raving about Louise right in front of my face. Why didn't you ask her to marry you? I'm sure she would have jumped at the chance. There aren't so many people asking her to marry them. It's too bad you didn't marry her. I'm sure you'd have been much happier.'

'Listen, baby,' he said, 'while you're talking about things like that, why didn't you marry Joe Brooks? I suppose he could have given you all the twenty-two-dollar hats you wanted, I suppose!'

'Well, I'm not so sure I'm not sorry I didn't,' she said. 'There! Joe Brooks wouldn't have waited until he got me all off alone and then sneered at my taste in clothes. Joe Brooks wouldn't ever hurt my feelings. Joe Brooks has always been fond of me. There!'

'Yeah,' he said. 'He's fond of you. He was so fond of you he didn't even send a wedding present. That's how fond of you he was.'

'I happen to know for a fact, she said,' 'that he was away on business, and as soon as he comes back he's going to give me anything I want for the apartment.'

'Listen,' he said. 'I don't want anything he gives you in our apartment. Anything he gives you I'll throw right out the

window. That's what I think of your friend Joe Brooks. And how do you know where he is and what he's going to do, anyway? Has he been writing to you?'

'I suppose my friends can correspond with me,' she said. 'I didn't hear there was any law against that.'

'Well, I suppose they can't!' he said. 'And what do you think of that? I'm not going to have my wife getting a lot of letters from cheap travelling salesmen!'

'Joe Brooks is not a cheap travelling salesman!' she said. 'He is not! He gets a wonderful salary.'

'Oh, yeah?' he said. 'Where did you hear that?'

'He told me so himself,' she said.

'Oh, he told you so himself,' he said. 'I see. He told you so himself.'

'You've got a lot of right to talk about Joe Brooks,' she said. 'You and your friend Louise. All you ever talk about is Louise.'

'Oh, for heaven's sakes!' he said. 'What do I care about Louise? I just thought she was a friend of yours, that's all. That's why I ever even noticed her.'

'Well, you certainly took an awful lot of notice of her to-day,' she said. 'On our wedding day! You said yourself when you were standing there in the church you just kept thinking of her. Right up at the altar. Oh, right in the presence of God! And all you thought about was Louise.'

'Listen, honey,' he said, 'I never should have said that. How does anybody know what kind of crazy things come into their heads when they're standing there waiting to get married? I was just telling you that because it was so kind of crazy. I thought it would make you laugh.'

'I know,' she said. 'I've been all sort of mixed up to-day, too. I told you that. Everything so strange and everything. And me all the time thinking about all those people all over the world, and now us here all alone, and everything. I know you get all mixed up. Only I did think, when you kept talking about how beautiful Louise looked, you did it with malice and forethought.'

'I never did anything with malice and forethought!' he said. 'I just told you that about Louise because I thought it would make you laugh.'

'Well, it didn't,' she said.

'No, I know it didn't,' he said. 'It certainly did not. Ah, baby, and we ought to be laughing, too. Hell, honey lamb, this is our honeymoon. What's the matter?'

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'I don't know,' she said. 'We used to squabble a lot when we were going together and then engaged and everything, but I thought everything would be so different as soon as you were married. And now I feel so sort of strange and everything. I feel so sort of alone.'

'Well, you see, sweetheart,' he said, 'we're not really married yet. I mean. I mean — well, things will be different afterwards. Oh, hell. I mean, we haven't been married very long.'

'No,' she said.

'Well, we haven't got much longer to wait now,' he said. 'I mean — well, we'll be in New York in about twenty minutes. Then we can have dinner, and sort of see what we feel like doing. Or I mean. Is there anything special you want to do to-night?'

'What?' she said.

'What I mean to say,' he said, 'would you like to go to a show or something?'

'Why, whatever you like,' she said. 'I sort of didn't think people went to theatres and things on their — I mean, I've got a couple of letters I simply must write. Don't let me forget.'

'Oh, he said. 'You're going to write letters to-night?'

'Well, you see,' she said, 'I've been perfectly terrible. What with all the excitement and everything. I never did thank poor old Mrs. Sprague for her berry spoon, and I never did a thing about those book ends the McMasters sent. It's just too awful of me. I've got to write them this very night.'

'And when you've finished writing your letters,' he said, 'maybe I could get you a magazine or a bag of peanuts.'

'What?' she said.

'I mean,' he said, 'I wouldn't want you to be bored.'

'As if I could be bored with you!' she said. 'Silly! Aren't we married? Bored!'

'What I thought,' he said, 'I thought when we got in, we could go right up to the Biltmore and anyway leave our bags, and maybe have a little dinner in the room, kind of quiet, and then do whatever we wanted. I mean. I mean — well, let's go right up there from the station.'

'Oh, yes, let's,' she said. 'I'm so glad we're going to the Biltmore. I just love it. The twice I've stayed in New York we've always stayed there, Papa and Mamma and Ellie and I, and I was crazy about it. I always sleep so well there. I go right off to sleep the minute I put my head on the pillow.'

'Oh, you do?' he said.

'At least, I mean,' she said. 'Way up high it's so quiet.'

'We might go to some show or other to-morrow night instead of to-night,' he said. 'Don't you think that would be better?'

'Yes, I think it might,' she said.

He rose, balanced a moment, crossed over and sat down beside her.

'Do you really have to write those letters to-night?' he said.

'Well,' she said, 'I don't suppose they'd get there any quicker than if I wrote them to-morrow.'

'There was a silence with things going on in it.

'And we won't ever fight any more, will we?' he said.

'Oh, no,' she said. 'Not ever! I don't know what made me do like that. It all got so sort of funny, sort of like a nightmare, the way I got thinking of all those people getting married all the time; and so many of them, it goes to pieces on account of fighting and everything. I got all mixed up thinking about them. Oh, I don't want to be like them. But we won't be, will we?'

'Sure we won't,' he said.

'We won't go all to pieces,' she said. 'We won't fight. It'll all be different, now we're married. It'll all be lovely. Reach

me down my hat, will you, sweetheart? It's time I was putting it on. Thanks. Ah, I'm so sorry you don't like it.'

'I do so like it!' he said.

'You said you didn't,' she said. 'You said you thought it was perfectly terrible.'

'I never said any such thing,' he said. 'You're crazy.'

'All right, I may be crazy,' she said. 'Thank you very much. But that's what you said. Not that it matters — it's just a little thing. But it makes you feel pretty funny to think you've gone and married somebody that says you have perfectly terrible taste in hats. And then goes and says you're crazy, beside.'

'Now, listen here,' he said. 'Nobody said any such thing. Why, I love that hat. The more I look at it the better I like it. I think it's great.'

'That isn't what you said before,' she said.

'Honey,' he said. 'Stop it, will you? What do you want to start all this for? I love the damned hat. I mean, I love your hat. I love anything you wear. What more do you want me to say?'

'Well, I don't want you to say it like that,' she said.

'I said I think it's great,' he said. 'That's all I said.'

'Do you really?' she said. 'Do you honestly? Ah, I'm so glad. I'd hate you not to like my hat. It would be — I don't know, it would be sort of such a bad start.'

'Well, I'm crazy for it,' he said. 'Now we've got that settled for heaven's sakes. Ah, baby. Baby lamb. We're not going to have any bad starts. Look at us — we're on our honeymoon. Pretty soon we'll be regular old married people. I mean. I mean, in a few minutes we'll be getting in to New York, and then we'll be going to the hotel, and then everything will be all right. I mean — well, look at us! Here we are, married! Here we are!'

'Yes, here we are,' she said. 'Aren't we?'

Rhodes Scholar

BY ALLEN READ

(From *The American Oxonian*)

OVER one of the college halls at Oxford University hung an expectant silence. The fifty freshmen gathered on the hard benches for the induction ceremony realized that the Principal was about to rise. They sat stiff and self-conscious, timidly glancing about at the gilt-framed portraits on the walls or looking straight ahead towards the dais at the front. On this platform, a few steps above the main floor, sat a row of gowned men behind the heavy oak table. These — actually in the flesh — were the dons that the freshmen had heard about; and in the centre, below the intricate coat of arms, was the most venerable of the group, the Principal, whose scholarly bearing befitted this sombre medieval hall.

One of the new students — he seemed slightly drenched — had a more mature cast of eye than the eighteen-year-olds about him. The rims of his glasses were heavier and darker, and his clothes had a broad un-English cut. He glanced about furtively and the trace of a smile gathered at the corners of his mouth. He was contrasting this solemn scene with that at an American college. There you waited your turn in the hubbub of your adviser's office and later filed hurriedly past a registrar's clerk-girl who whisked papers about in a wicker wire booth.

This student recalled his first American college, where he had got his B.A. — a denominational institution in a little Iowa town. It was a small school, but he had some friends on the faculty. Then at the age of twenty-one he had gone up to the State University for a year and got a master's degree in history. He had enjoyed the work and his adviser had liked his thesis. He had proved that the early Iowa settlers were largely Southerners, and that ten years before the Civil War Iowa would have sided

with the Southern cause. His biggest ordeal of the year had been trying out for the Rhodes scholarship to come to Oxford University and he had trembled before the examining committee. But after a long discussion they had called in the candidates and announced their decision: 'Mr. Ross.' Now Mr. Ross, a freshman again, was starting out at Oxford, waiting for the induction ceremony.

He sniffed at the faint sour smell of beer that hung over the room. He would learn later of sconces and convivial 'bump suppers.'

His eyes and those of all others in the room converged upon the Principal as the aged man put his hands on the carved arms of the chair and lifted himself up. The long, swinging sleeves of his black academic gown gave his figure a sort of regality. He smiled in a grandfatherly way and squinted as if the dim light hurt his eyes.

His informal words of greeting had a smoothness that made them seem perfunctory. For many years, probably, they had welcomed each new freshman group. 'You will first read this Latin oath, placing your hand on the Bible,' he intoned, 'and then sign your name in the Buttery Book.' He nodded toward the Vice-Principal, who sat at the end of the table with a double sized ledger in front of him. 'You will then be full members of this ancient and honourable college. Now I shall call the roll of candidates for admission to membership.'

From this paper in his hand he began reading the names alphabetically: 'Mr. Adcock.'

The word 'Present' came shakily from a freshman off at the side, and everyone turned to look at him.

'Mr. Alford.'

The answer was a guttural syllable probably meant to be 'Here.' 'Mr. Arnold.'

This was a man with self-assurance. He might become president of the debating society before he left college. With a soft-turned modulation he enunciated. 'Heah.' His answer seemed to give courage to those who followed.

'Mr. Bartlett.' 'Heah.'

'Mr. Broadhead.' 'Heah.'

The Iowa Rhodes scholar noticed that they used the kind of 'r' that he called 'Eastun.' He affected jocularity when he put a note-book ring to his eye for a monocle and pretended to have 'cultuah.' But it seemed to come natural to them. Probably it did come natural. His own 'r', he reflected, was actually pronounced in a word.

There was a long list of c's—about a dozen—and the answer came with regularity. 'Heah.' 'Heah.' 'Heah.' 'Heah.'

With a squirm of the tongue he formed the word as he pronounced it: 'He-er.' How outlandish it would sound in this group, he realized.

'Mr. Dallam.' 'Heah.'

'Mr. Dunsworth.' 'Heah.'

The Rhodes scholar edged forward on the hard bench and a sort of panic came over him. Why, he couldn't flout this whole group of people, this whole University. He'd have to give in to their pronunciation, of course. He could force himself to say 'Heah' if he wanted to.

But he was an American.

'Mr. Edmonds.' 'Heah.'

And a Middle-Westerner at that.

'Mr. Farrell.' 'Heah.'

As the steady march continued, the muscles in his shoulders teased. The r's would come along now in a matter of minutes, and he would have to decide one way or the other. He loved the Middle West. People seldom talked about it, but he knew that he did. He remembered his flare of wrath upon reading an article in a big magazine by a man from the Rockies who said that prairie was monotonous and no one could love it. Why, the prairie was something you could bathe yourself in.

He remembered a certain afternoon during his high school years when the feeling had taken hold of him possessively. He had driven out with his mother from their town home to the farm she had inherited. As she talked about the place with the

tenant, the son had climbed to the rear door of the haymow that overlooked the fields beyond. The summer's heat held the corn rows in a gelatinous silence and pressed so heavily on the crumbly loam that a soil-whiff rolled up and sent a twinge deep in his throat. These fruity undulations of prairie made a homeland. In cultivating these fields here —

'Mr. Hassall.' 'Heah.'

— his grandfather had spent his life. The boy had thought of his grandfather's stories of early days, stories of hardships and failures and victories, stories that gave this soil a history and a background. This was the boy's region by inheritance.

'Mr. Huddlestone.' 'Heah.'

But there are circumstances —, he began to himself with a feverish compression of his lips.

'Mr. Janson-Smith.' 'Heah.'

The Rhodes scholar recalled the thesis he had written for his master's degree at his State University. He had fully immersed himself in the early history of his state. What fun it had been, sitting in the State Historical Library, slowly working through the several panels of county histories. These bulky, old-fashioned volumes, padded with Civil War rosters and records of early business machinations, had chapters that effervesced with pioneers' lives — their dreams, their brawlings, their courage in breaking sod that was matted with roots of prairie grass.

'Mr. Knox.' 'Heah.'

The scholar gripped the bench. Were they already at the n's? No, a Knox was a k. At that only a few more moments remained until the fatal words 'Mr. Ross.'

'Mr. Lansdowne.' 'Heah.'

Perhaps he could say 'Present' and avoid the difficulty. No, no one had said it since the very first man, and that would be sidestepping the issue anyway. He would have to bend his action one way or the other all during his Oxford time.

'Mr. Lawrence.' 'Heah.'

He darted his eyes feverishly among the English boys. They

were still and intent with 'first-day' stiffness. They all had on the little commoner's gown, like his own. Each person in front of him was an item of black uniformity. Could he stand out against them all with his own kind of a 'here'?

'Mr. Martin.' 'Heah.'

Isn't it the better part of discretion to 'fit in'? Didn't his grandparent pioneers adapt themselves to the prairie? Everyone had told him not to remain an outsider in Oxford.

'Mr. Murray.' 'Heah.'

He didn't want to be an outsider.

'Mr. Niblett.' 'Heah.'

He was becoming part of an 'ancient and honourable' college, with centuries behind it. Shouldn't he submit to its ways? He was sent here to fit in, to get what Oxford was supposed to give. Everybody said 'Heah.' That was the way. It doesn't pay to make a fool of yourself.

'Mr. Otley.' 'Heah.'

He could change his pronunciation. People had done it before. But it was nasty business, he realized. His teacher in freshman composition had been brought up in Iowa and had got her master's degree at the State University, and then after one summer session at Columbia in New York City she had come back with a full-fledged Eastern accent. How people had razzed her behind her back and recounted incidents where she had forgotten for the moment!

'Mr. Padwick.' 'Heah.'

God, the p's!

And there was that fat returned Rhodes scholar at his American college whom everybody had disliked. He had lifted his hat whenever he met another man. He was the kind who said 'Heah.'

The scholar formed the syllables on his lips, experimentally — 'He-ah.' How-a-perversed it sounded! He gulped laboriously and swayed forward with his head bent.

'Don't be an outsider,' he snarled at himself. 'Don't make a show of yourself here at the beginning!'

'Mr. Partridge.' 'Heah.'

'But I'd be a traitor!' he gasped. 'I'm an American, and I know I love my Middle West, my prairie.'

'Mr. Pennington.' 'Heah.'

'Don't be a fool!'

'Mr. Radford.' 'Heah.'

'Mr. Ross.'

The eyes of the few who had learned his name turned upon him, and before making his answer he rumbled his throat in a preliminary way.

The Great Hunter of the Woods

BY JAMES STEVENS

(From *The Frontier*)

'I WAS thinkin' of the most famous hunt of history,' said old Larrity the bullcook. 'That was when Paul Bunyan, the first great hunter of the woods, shouldered his scatter-cannon to bring down the wing-tailed turkey that had ravaged the Round River country of its game. A terrible turkey that was indade, for even such hunters as Paul Bunyan and Dublin, the wire-haired terror who was tall as any tree. Such huntin' there was in that time long ago, a time too far away for even mention in the history books.'

The old logger stopped there for a shrewd glance at the two by his side. They were Jeff Gavin, whose grandfather was the owner of the logging camp, and Mike, the boy's wire-haired terrier pup. Both were staring mournfully at the flaming leaves of dogwood thickets up the creek. There three men in red caps and brown coats, with big spotted dogs sniffing and scampering at their heels, had vanished a few moments before.

'Whist, now, and you should be glad your grandpa left you with me. Pheasants they will be shootin',' said Larrity scornfully. 'And the huntin' of chickens is too triffin' for the bother of old woodsmen like us, so it is. How much better, Jeff, to sun ourselves here on the creek bank and talk of the days of real huntin'.'

Curiosity lightened the boy's eyes. On other Saturday afternoons he had listened to stories of Paul Bunyan from old Larrity, who had learned them many years ago in the far-away Michigan woods. Here in the Oregon timber the stories would come to life. The Gavin grandson forgot his grief at being left in camp by the hunters. Mike, the terrier pup, also seemed resigned, as he stretched himself out in the rusty grass of the creek bank, crossed his paws, rested his chin on them and shut his eyes.

Old Larrity was telling of the great hunter of the woods. As his voice drawled on, the boy saw a mighty figure rising dimly among the shadows of the trees. . . . Paul Bunyan, whose curly black beard brushed the tree tops . . . and at his heels trotted Dublin, wire-haired terror of the hunting trails. . . .

*

On the first day of a certain Christmas week (said old Larrity) the great hunter of the woods and his dog, Dublin, marched into the Round River country. This was the game country in the time when Ameriky was all one big timberland, and Paul Bunyan was the ruler of it and all the rest. In the black wild woods circled by Round River the famous logger always did his Christmas huntin'. That was only to provide rare holiday dinners for his seven hun'erd bully men. This huntin' season the reg'lar game was ruined. And all because the terrible turkey, the most ferocious fowl of the tall timber, had at last migrated to Round River from the mountains of the North.

Paul Bunyan had no hint of the trouble and grief ahead as he tramped through the autumn woods for Round River. He saw nothin' but a promise of cheer in the keen, bright mornin'. Above him shone the clean blue sky and about him blazed the fire colours of leaves. The frost made his breath steam till white clouds trailed him. Sunlight glinted from the forty-seven barrels of his scatter-cannon. At his heels the tremendous terror was a gay dog, ever waggin' his tree of a tail.

For Paul Bunyan talked to Dublin, even as you talk to your Mike when the two of you walk together. It was all gladness in the mighty voice, for Paul Bunyan spoke of the men in the camp behind. Of Johnny Inkslinger Paul spoke, that timekeeper who was such a big figger that his pens were made of peeled trees. He had kind words also for the Big Swede, his foreman, and a man with legs so much like sawlogs that the reg'lar sized loggers were for ever goin' after them with crosscuts and axes. Paul Bunyan spoke fondly to Dublin of Babe the Blue Ox, a

beast that was even bigger than the dog, measurin' forty-two ax handles and a barrel of pickles betwixt the horns.

Of all these big figgers Paul Bunyan spoke kindly and well, but his best words were for his seven hun'erd men, who were no bigger than me or your grandfather. Never had his men done such fine loggin' as in this season. And for a reward they should have the grandest Christmas dinner ever heard of at all.

'What game shall it be for such a dinner?' said Paul Bunyan to Dublin, when they were to the bank of Round River. 'The best meat will be none too good for my loggers' Christmas dinner, no, sir! Should we bag some fat bucks for rabbit stews, Dublin? Or deer, to make a great steak dinner? Or cinnamon bears for the spicy roasts the loggers like so well? What do you say, you wire-haired terror, you?'

Dublin acted for all the world like he understood every one of Paul Bunyan's words. He sat down, and slowly scratched his ear with his left foot, seemin' to be in the deepest thought.

'I know what you want to be huntin', first, last and all the time, Dublin, I do.' Paul Bunyan smiled down through his beard. 'Yes, sir, mince-hunter that you are. You would have us go back with nothin' but mince meat for the Christmas pies, you would. But we must hunt other game than minces.'

Sayin' that, he leaned restfully on his scatter-cannon and gazed into the black wild woods across the river. Now he began to notice that they were silent, almost. Every other autumn the woods had been roarin' with sounds of wild life. The game of the country had never migrated beyond the river that circled their home.

We would think such a stream as Round River most peculiar nowadays, but sure, in the time of Paul Bunyan rivers were young and wild, and each one would run to suit itself. It suited this river to run always in a circle, bein' too proud, no doubt, to run into another river, or even into the great salt ocean.

Whatever the reason, I'm telling you now, that river was round. In its circle lived timber beasts like the hodag and sauger, which are remembered only by old loggers. And there were creatures

like our deer, rabbits, bobcats and bears; only mind you they all had tails in those times when the timberlands were young.

Fine and flourishin' tails were on all of them. The roarin' rabbit of the Round River woods was no such timorous, cowerin' and cringin' beastie as the rabbit of our time. Before he lost his tail the Round River rabbit would tackle a panther, he would, noosin' his powerful, long tail about the beast's neck, jerkin' him down, then kickin' the life out of the panther with both hind feet. In them days the blood-curdlin' roar of a rabbit was the most awful of all the wild woods' sounds. The rabbits had run all the panthers out of the woods when the terrible turkey come to Round River.

The deer of them woods also had a fine tail for himself, one like a plume and the brightest spot of beauty in the forest. The bobcat's tail was more of a fightin' kind, like you'd expect. It was a fang tail, with sharp teeth in the tip, and with them the bobcat would strike like a snake at birds and small beasts for his prey. The black and cinnamon bears had stiff brushy tails which they used mostly for the sweepin' of their caves. There were never cleaner creatures than the cave bears of Paul Bunyan's time; always hustlin' and bustlin' in every nook and cranny, keepin' everything spick and span.

Paul Bunyan did not dream that such a course had befallen the timber beasts as the loss of their tails. He had never even heard of the wing-tailed terrible turkey, so of course he did not know how this ferocious fowl made its meals. The dismal quiet of the black wild woods was all a mystery to Paul Bunyan, a quiet broken only by a whispering moan like the rustle of wind in trees at night. But this was no wind, indade; it was the timber beasts of Round River, hidin' away, and sighin' in sorrow and sadness for the lost tails of them.

Paul Bunyan wondered and worried, as he forded the river. Not even the mutter of a mince was heard, for that little beast, whose meat was so good for pies, was entirely gone. On no other huntin' trip had Paul Bunyan and Dublin come into the woods without hearin' minces mutterin' from their lairs. For the

minces of Round River always muttered, so they did, just as the rabbits roared and the bears bellowed and growled. That mutter was the sweetest of music to the wire-haired terror's ears.

At last Dublin thought he heard it, when they had reached the inside bank of Round River. Paul Bunyan leaned on his scatter-cannon again, and wondered and worried still more about the dismal quiet of the black wild woods, with only that whisperin' moan to break it at all. But something else was soundin' in the terror's ears. He perked them up and made himself believe that this was a mince mutterin' out of the woods. So he came to a point, with the blunt muzzle of himself stuck out, and his tail wavin' and waggin' in the wind. For Dublin could never point a mince without h'istin' and waggin' his fine tail, such a gay dog he was when huntin' his favourite game.

Then it happened. What Dublin thought was the mutter of a mince suddenly grewed into growlin' thunder. Paul Bunyan stiffened up, but before he could bring the scatter-cannon to his shoulder a coppery streak touched with red at the head of it and with a whirlin' blur behind, flashed from sight along the circle of the river. In the same instant there rose a fearful howl of grief from the wire-haired terror.

Pore dog, indeed pore Dublin, sure he had a right to howl, for all but a stub of his tail was gone, clipped clean away before he could wink an eye. Now he was a sad dog, with tears tricklin' from his eyes as he looked up at Paul Bunyan. He whimpered and moaned with a sound which melted into that whisperin' from the forest, and now that was a mystery no longer to Paul Bunyan. He knew the reason for the sorrowful sound. Certainly all the timber beasts had been denuded of their tails, and like Dublin all were bemoanin' their loss. And the robber of all was none other than this red-headed thunderbolt in coppery feathers, this ferocious fowl who drove like lightnin' through the air by the power of his whirlin' wing tail.

Paul Bunyan figgered that out as he doctored Dublin's hurt with arnicky, staunched it and bound it. Then with kind words he comforted the grievin' terror. As he did so, he again heard

that sound like the mutter of a mince from its lair; and it soon grew into rolls of thunder.

The great hunter of the woods stared up at the sound, his head turnin' back till the tip of his curly black beard waved at the sky. And here was the roar and the rush again; but now it was Paul Bunyan's time to howl; for all of his beard was gone, so it was, nipped and clipped slick away from his chin.

But Paul Bunyan did not howl with grief, nor did he roar with rage or sigh with sorrow or anything like that at all. Paul Bunyan was not that kind of a man. Enough had happened, indade, to drive anybody distracted—the ruin of the game, the loss of the grand Christmas dinner he had planned for his men, the thievery of Dublin's fine tail, and the snippin' and pluckin' away of his famous beard. Disaster and disgrace it all was, enough to make even a hero like Paul Bunyan despair.

But sure the great hunter would not give up, not even when he realized that he could do no thinkin' until his beard grewed out again. Paul Bunyan could think only when he brushed his beard with a young pine tree. Now he had no beard to brush at all.

'If I cannot think, then I must act,' said Paul Bunyan, makin' the best of things. 'And I'll do that soon and sudden.'

What to do was plain enough. Paul Bunyan could see it all without thinkin'. Both times the wing-tailed terrible turkey had flown in a perfect circle, follyin' the course of Round River. To get the feathered thunderbolt on the wing, he must shoot in a circle. So Paul Bunyan first bent the forty-seven barrels of his scatter-cannon so that they would do just that—shoot their loads of cannon balls in an in-curve that would exactly folly the course of Round River.

Next, it was plain that he must set up a lure, to bring the ferocious fowl swoopin' down again. Paul Bunyan fixed a lure by pluckin' a colossyal cat tail from the river bank and bindin' it to the pore stump left to Dublin. The dog whimpered, and he shed more tears at such a fake of a tail; he felt disgraced, indade, to have a cat tail foisted on such a tremenjuss dog as

himself, and would have stuck it betwixt his hind legs and crept off in shame. But Paul Bunyan spoke to him stern-like, and Dublin, obejient wire-haired terror that he was, set up and took notice, 'flourishin' the shameful fake of a tail to please his master.

Well, the fake fooled the terrible turkey, who had no more brains than the small gobblers of our own time. Soon there was thê mutter again, and then the thunder. A coppery streak bolted down from the blue sky, and the false tail was snipped up like lightnin'. So fast was it grabbed and gobbled that Paul Bunyan's scatter-cannon would have been no use at all, had not the terrible turkey gone red with wrath over the deceit played on him. He stopped in mid air to spit the cat tail out of his beak, and also to strut and pout — and that was the chance for the great hunter to bring him down.

For two seconds Paul Bunyan took careful aim. The terrible turkey hovered low, and so was on a level with Paul Bunyan's shoulders. While he hovered, he puffed and swelled, the terrible turkey did, till only his wattles showed like flames from his ruffle of coppery feathers. His wrathy gobbles sounded like the stormiest thunder now. The wing tail of him, spread like a wind-mill, whirled slow, just holdin' him above the trees.

Paul Bunyan's aim was set. He squeezed the trigger, and the forty-seven barrels roared as one cannon. The balls whistled and screamed, powder smoke fogged up like a storm cloud, the earth shook, the timber shivered, and waves rolled over the river from the mighty blast of Paul Bunyan's scatter-cannon. The terrible turkey took alarm in the instant of an instant, so he did.

The cloud of balls was hardly out of the muzzles before he was off at full speed, his side wings spread, his wing tail a whirlin' blur again, his body a red-headed coppery streak.

'A second too late,' groaned Paul Bunyan. 'He is out-flyin' my cannon balls, a curse on me now for bein' too careful and slow!'

The terrible turkey was gone. The streak and blur of him disappeared around the curve of the river. The cloud of cannon

balls curved after him, but slower, and they were soon left behind.

Paul Bunyan was like to give up at that. He was minded to turn his back on the huntin' woods at once and return to his loggers with an empty bag. Never had he been so grieved, to know that this year he could give his loggers no fine Christmas dinner. Dublin stood by him and licked his hand, tryin' also, pore dog, to wag the stub of a tail which was left to him.

'So we must go back, Dublin,' said Paul Bunyan sadly, 'without even a mince for the loggers. Dear, oh dear, and such a curse!'

He swung his gun over his shoulder to go. Just then the terrible turkey thundered down the river again. It was roarin' thunder indade this trip, for the fowl had his wing tail whirlin' at the speed limit. Down the river he curved, and was gone. And now, from away back up the river, sounded the whistle and search of the cannon balls, too slow indade for that feathered thunderbolt. Paul Bunyan blushed with shame to see them so far behind.

Now they were beginnin' to fall. White spouts of water and foam gushed up from the river as spent cannon balls dropped, the spray flashin' in the sunlight, makin' rainbows bright to see. But Paul Bunyan took no joy in the sight. He was ashamed to think that his cannon balls were so slow that the terrible turkey might catch 'em from behind in the great circle of the river.

Paul Bunyan raised his eyes, to look behind the cannon balls which still whistled and whined down the river. And now Paul Bunyan got a hope, a flimsy and scrawny hope, but he needed no more. Paul Bunyan was that kind of a man.

'Up and ready, Dublin!' he roared. 'Sic 'em boy! *Up* the river!'

That was enough for Dublin. What was up the wire-haired terror didn't know, but he lepped up river. And with that Paul Bunyan threw up his scatter-cannon with the forty-seven barrels of it curved like a hoop; and he let fly. After the terrible turkey? Not at all. Sure, he'd tried that once. The bird was too fast for

that. Paul Bunyan turned his back and fired in the opposite direction. For when he said to Dublin, 'Up the river, boy,' he'd bent the forty-seven barrels to the other side. Down the river curved the big bird and was gone. So *up* the river curved the shot, whistling and screeching. And Dublin after them.

There was a great sound as the terrible turkey flew head on into them new cannon balls. Feathers flew in clouds, and the river boiled and foamed as the cannon balls splashed down. The terrible turkey fell, but in a great rainbow curve, for his speed carried him on, turnin' him over and over, while the dog lepped in frantic chase of him.

Paul Bunyan, runnin' after both, saw the terrible turkey sail down like a coppery cloud, while Dublin lunged up like a black-spotted white cloud to meet him. The great hunter reached the death-grapple just in time. With one snap Dublin had taken off the terrible turkey's head in return for his tail and was goin' after the rest of him. Paul Bunyan had to grope his way to the dog through a snowstorm of feathers, but he got there in time.

Dublin soon had the terrible turkey well plucked. And when Paul Bunyan saw the royal drumsticks of the fowl, the rich meat of his breast, the grandeur of his giblets, and all the rest, his gladness was so great that he was like to sheddin' tears of joy.

'Would you but look at the drumsticks of him, Dublin!' cried Paul Bunyan. 'What logger would ask for a rabbit stew, deer steak or cinnamon bear roast, when he can have such fine eatin' as this for his Christmas dinner? Tender and plump, juicy and drippin', crisped to a fine golden brown, stuffed till he bulges, this behemoth of a bird will be enough for twice seven hun'erd men. Here is the meat for the finest Christmas dinner ever heard of; yes, sir!'

Yet the Dublin dog looked troubled. And Paul Bunyan knew why.

'Never mind,' said the great logger cheerily. I'll invent a recipe for mince meat which will beat that from the mutterin' minces of the Round River woods. You leave it to me, Dublin.'

And so Paul Bunyan did. He invented such fine mince meat

that cooks have used it ever since, and minces are never hunted any more for their meat at all. And the dinner from the terrible turkey was so ravishin' to Paul Bunyan's seven hun'erd men that they took his breast bone and made a mountain out of it, to stand as a moniment to the first Christmas turkey dinner.

And so we have had turkey dinners for Christmas ever since. To be sure, they are not terrible turkeys nowadays, for Paul Bunyan glued up the tails of all the young ones of the turkey tribe, and soon they had forgot how to fly with any but their side wings. But even our tame turkeys of to-day will pout and strut and spread their stiff tails, just like the terrible turkey of old. And their tails look like windmills, but never can they twist and turn, to make turkeys fly like lightnin' and thunder. Nor can our tame turkeys bite off dogs' tails, but they will peck at them every chance, in memory of what the daddy of 'em all used to do.

There is a bit of sadness to remember, too. For the rabbit was made a coward by the loss of the tail with which he choked panthers in the old times, and the rabbit roars no more. Nor did deer, bobcats and bears ever grow fine tails again. Neither do you see tails worth the mention on wire-haired terriers, these tiny descendants of Dublin, the tremendous terror who follied the first great hunter of the woods.

But sure it was worth it all to discover the glory of turkey for Christmas dinner. For that you must ever remember Paul Bunyan.

*

Old Larrity was silent. Jeff stroked his dog's head and stared out into the tall timber. Now, here in the autumn woods, he could imagine that he was Paul Bunyan and that Mike the pup was Dublin, a wire-haired terror as tall as a tree.

The Model House

BY WILLIAM HAZLETT UPSON

(From *The Saturday Evening Post*)

ALEXANDER BOTTS

EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE EARTHWORM TRACTOR
HOTEL MINERVA, FLORENCE, ITALY.

September 25, 1928.

MR. GILBERT HENDERSON,
EARTHWORM TRACTOR COMPANY,
EARTHWORM CITY, ILLINOIS.

DEAR HENDERSON: I arrived in Florence early this afternoon, along with good old Gadget, who continues to be the most helpful and efficient wife a tractor salesman ever had, and with Marco Manzione, the young Italian whom I have hired as first assistant for my big selling drive in this country. Marco had sent word ahead, and our prospect was here at the hotel when we arrived. It is most fortunate that we came, as I am practically sure that this bozo is going to buy a tractor.

His name is Signor Taddeo Ghini. And in spite of the fact that he is an Italian—he was born at a little town called Sanzo, about ten kilometres from here—he is a tall blond with light hair and blue eyes. He seems to have plenty of brains and lots of money. He speaks English very well, as he went to America twenty years ago at the age of fifteen, and has lived there ever since, gradually building up a very prosperous business as a

* From *Earthworms in Europe* by William Hazlett Upson. By permission of the publishers Messrs. Farrar and Rinehart, Inc.

building contractor in a town in New Jersey. And he seems very much interested in the Earthworm tractor. Take it all around, he is obviously a fine fellow, and one whose acquaintance I have a feeling may well be cultivated.

'I am in something of a hurry,' he said, when we had introduced ourselves. 'I am driving out to look over a farm I have recently purchased near Fiesole. Could you people come along? If I buy a tractor, it would be used on this farm, so it wouldn't hurt you to look it over.'

'We would be delighted to come,' I said.

Signor Ghini led us out into the Piazza Santa Maria Novella and we all got into his automobile—a very expensive-looking, American sport touring car. The chauffeur started the motor, and as we drove along Signor Ghini explained to Gadget and to me why he was interested in a tractor.

'I am thinking of buying one of your machines,' he said, 'as a gift for my father and mother.'

'You are very generous,' said Gadget.

'I'm afraid I'm not,' he said. 'Most of my life I have treated my parents pretty badly. I went to America when I was a boy, and stayed over there for twenty years, working hard and making money for myself, and forgetting all about the old folks back here. You know how it is. When you are away from people you forget about them. If you don't watch yourself you lose touch with them completely.'

'Yes,' I said, 'I suppose that is natural.'

'It is natural,' he said, 'but it's not right. Well, one evening last spring I was reading a book.'

'You were reading a book?' said Gadget.

Signor Ghini smiled. He had a very pleasant smile. 'Yes,' he said. 'Of course I am nothing but a building contractor, but in spite of that I do read a book once in a while.'

'Nothing to be ashamed of,' I said. 'Even a tractor salesman has been known at rare intervals to do the same.'

'This book which I was reading,' he continued, 'was the Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini.'

'I have read it,' said Gadget, who is always right there on this highbrow stuff.

'Maybe you remember, then, madam,' continued Signor Ghini, 'that this Benvenuto was a pretty wild proposition.'

'Yes,' said Gadget.

'He was a good artist, and handy with tools, but he was crazy as a bedbug. Anybody he didn't like, he would stick a knife in them, or crack them over the head as quick as you or I would swat a fly. Half his life he spent fighting, for no reason at all except that he had such a vile temper. And yet this man—who had practically no morals at all — was constantly sending money to his old father here in Florence. As I read that book I became more and more ashamed of myself. Here was this wicked Benvenuto, a self-confessed murderer, eking out a difficult and uncertain living at his goldsmithing, and yet sending generous amounts to his father. And there was I, smug, self-satisfied, a supposedly respectable citizen making more money in the house-building business than I could possibly use, and yet keeping it all for myself. You wouldn't believe it, but I had never sent my parents a single cent. And for several years I hadn't even written them. It started me thinking. And when I start thinking, I usually do something about it.'

'And what did you do?' I asked.

'The first thing I did, I arranged my business so I could take a long vacation. Then, last June, I came over here and visited my parents. They are very fine people, Mr. Botts.'

'I have no doubt of it,' I said.

'I had come,' continued Signor Ghini, 'with the idea of doing something rather substantial for my parents. I am not exactly a multimillionaire, but I have been successful. And as I am not married, I have more money than I need for myself. I had thought of buying my father and mother a large castle or villa somewhere around here, so that they could spend the rest of their days in luxury and elegance. But as soon as I had spent one afternoon with them I saw that this would not do at all.'

'Why not?' asked Gadget.

'Because they are plain country people — peasants, I suppose you would call them. They have always lived very simply, and they are too old to change.'

'Are you sure about that?' I asked. 'I doubt if anybody ever gets too old to appreciate a little extra luxury.'

'You are right,' said Signor Ghini. 'A little extra luxury is all right, but not too much. I asked my parents one day, in an off-hand manner, how they would like to live in a big house with lots of servants, and they both laughed derisively at the idea. They have been used to doing their own work, and a lot of servants would only be a nuisance. They absolutely don't want to have anything to do with servants. At the same time, as they grow older, the housework and the chores become more and more of a burden. Right now my younger sister is with them, and she is a great help. But she is going to be married pretty soon, and my parents will be left alone. It will be a little hard for them, but I think I have figured out a scheme that will help them.'

'And what is the scheme?' asked Gadget.

Signor Ghini smiled happily. 'I think,' he said, 'I have hit on exactly the thing. About two months ago I bought a small farm with a very simple little house on it, and since then I have worked like mad fixing it up as a model servantless house.'

'What a marvellous idea,' said Gadget.

'Do you really think so?'

'Of course.'

'And do you think my parents will like it?'

'Of course they will.'

'I certainly hope so,' said Signor Ghini. 'I haven't told them anything about it. It is going to be a surprise. I'm going to bring them over to-morrow and present it to them. I am giving the place a last inspection this afternoon. We are almost there now.'

All this time the car had been climbing up on to the high land north-east of the city. We passed through Fiesole and finally stopped in front of a small stone house a short distance beyond.

'Come on in,' said Signor Ghini.

We entered. We looked around. And for several minutes we were speechless with astonishment and admiration. It was just a little place, but everything in it was absolutely perfect. There was a small living and dining room with stone walls, oak beams overhead, a fireplace, and ancient leaded-glass windows. The furniture was plain and simple. It must have been very old. The wood looked as if it had been waxed and polished for hundreds of years, and it had a rich, warm glow about it that you never find in new furniture.

There were two cute bedrooms, each with a bathroom. At one side of the house was a cool little enclosed garden, and a terrace with a view of the valley of the Arno, the whole city of Florence, and the hills beyond. We looked at this view for at least ten minutes. Then Signor Ghini took us back into the house and showed us the kitchen.

'In furnishing this place,' he explained, 'I have tried to combine the best of Italy with the best of America. The living room and the bedrooms are in the old Italian peasant style. The bathrooms and the kitchen are pure American. I am especially proud of this kitchen.'

'I should think you might be,' said Gadget, 'What a kitchen! What a kitchen!'

Signor Ghini was much pleased. 'Practically all this stuff came from America,' he said. 'Look, the electric refrigerator was turned on only this morning, and already we have plenty of ice cubes. This little door is where you throw the garbage. It drops down into the incinerator in the cellar. This other door is the clothes chute.'

'And what's this over here?' asked Gadget.

'That's the dishwasher sink. You stack the dishes in this wire basket right over the little paddle wheel. You turn this handle, which lets in hot water. You throw in washing powder. You close the lid. And you start the paddle wheel, which shoots the water all over the dishes. Then you drain out the dirty water, rinse the dishes, and the job is done.'

'Alexander,' said Gadget, 'when we get back to California I must have one of these things.'

'Over here,' said Signor Ghini, 'is the electric mixing machine; it mixes dough, grinds meat and coffee, slices vegetables, beats eggs, whips cream, turns the ice-cream freezer, and even grinds knives and scissors.'

'Swell!' said Gadget. 'I must have one of these too.'

'The two kitchen cabinets,' continued Signor Ghini, 'are the best that can be bought.'

'And the arrangement is so good,' said Gadget. 'Everything is placed so you don't have to waste steps at all.'

'This thing here,' said Signor Ghini, 'is the electric wine press.'

'Is that American too?' I asked.

'Certainly,' he said, 'although over there it is sold as a grape-juice extractor. And now we will look at the cellar.'

We descended the stairs and inspected the washing machine. It had one compartment for washing, and another where the clothes could be whirled around until dry. Signor Ghini had put in a few old towels for demonstration purposes. He ran some water over them, gave them a spin, and then showed us with great pride how the water had been whirled out of them. After this he had us look over the ironing machine, the garbage incinerator, the hot-water heater and the oil-burning, steam-heating plant. Then we went out to the barn.

'My father,' explained Signor Ghini, 'would never be happy without a little farm work. There are about ten hectares of ground here, and as he will probably want to work it all, I think he ought to have a tractor.'

'I am sure of it,' I said.

'I have practically decided to get one,' he went on, 'but I don't know as much about agricultural machinery as I do about household appliances. I hate to bother you too much, but I was wondering if you could bring your tractor out here to-morrow and demonstrate it. I don't want to buy it until I am sure that it will work out all right on this particular farm.'

'You are absolutely right,' I said. 'We will go back to Florence

at once, stop at the freight station and get the machine which we have had shipped down from Genoa. We'll grease it up and get it all ready this afternoon. And to-morrow morning we'll bring it out.'

'Fine,' said Signor Ghini. 'I will drive you back to Florence at once.'

As we were leaving, a very pretty Italian girl and a nice-looking young Italian man appeared, and Signor Ghini introduced them as his sister and her boy friend. After chatting with them a few minutes our host led us back to his car and we started along the road to Florence.

'My sister and her future husband,' he remarked, 'are very keen about this house. They have encouraged me a lot. Sometimes I get scared for fear my parents won't like it, but they tell me I am crazy and that they are sure to just love it.'

'Of course they will,' said Gadget. 'It is a peach of a little place. And it is a wonderful thing you are doing, fixing it up this way and giving it to them.'

'I am glad you think so. A lot of people think I am all wrong.'

'Apple sauce. Why should they think that?'

'There is a lot of criticism by people in the neighbourhood — especially those belonging to what you might call the upper crust of society.'

'What do they say?' asked Gadget.

'First of all, they say that in Florence and the vicinity there are a great many of the fine old families that were completely impoverished by the war. These people had been used to all the luxuries, and now a lot of them don't even have the necessities. Some of them have to do their own housework. A few have even had to find jobs to support themselves.'

'That's tough luck on them,' said Gadget, 'but what has all this to do with your giving your parents a house?'

'They say that it's an insult to these people — these real ladies and gentlemen — to flaunt in their faces the spectacle of a couple of uneducated peasants enjoying so many luxuries that the real aristocrats now have to do without.'

'What else do they say?'

'Oh, they say a lot more. Besides insulting the upper classes, I am starting in to ruin the lower classes. They say that even the best peasants and servants are completely ruined by too much wealth. They become proud and independent. They forget their proper station in life. They become impudent and refuse to work for their superiors except at outrageously high wages. Besides this, they misuse any luxuries you give them. They spend their money foolishly, and in the end are much worse off than if they had been left in their natural state of healthy simplicity.'

'And these people think that by giving your parents this house you are going to spoil them completely — is that it?'

'Apparently it is,' said Signor Ghini.

'If I were you,' said Gadget, 'I would go right ahead and spoil them as much as possible. I think they'll enjoy it.'

'Of course they will,' I said.

'Well,' said Signor Ghini, 'I'm going ahead with it anyway, and I hope it turns out all right.'

When we reached Florence we had the chauffeur drop Marco, Gadget and me at the freight station. We claimed the tractor and the plough, and got them all ready for the demonstration. To-morrow morning we will get under way early, and by to-morrow night I hope to write you that we have made a sale and contributed our bit toward the ruination of Signor Ghini's respected old father and mother.

Most sincerely,

ALEXANDER BOTTS.

ALEXANDER BOTTS

EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE EARTHWORM TRACTOR
HOTEL MINERVA, FLORENCE, ITALY.

—
Wednesday Evening,
September 26, 1928.

MR. GILBERT HENDERSON,
EARTHWORM TRACTOR COMPANY,
EARTHWORM CITY, ILLINOIS.

Dear Henderson: What a day this has been! And this evening we absolutely don't know where we are at. Last night I had rather laughed at Signor Ghini's fears that he might fail to please his parents or that he might in some mysterious way ruin them. But to-night there is nothing to laugh at at all. For it appears that Signor Ghini has not only ruined his parents; he seems to have annihilated them entirely. Furthermore, our chances of selling the tractor seem to be fairly slim — and all through no fault of mine, or Gadget's, or Marco's.

Early this morning I drove the tractor out of the city, up the hill, through Fiesole, and on to the little villa. Gadget rode beside me and Marco occupied the seat on the plough. We arrived about nine o'clock, and found that Signor Ghini's sister and the boy friend were already there. They were both much excited. Signor Ghini had gone in his car to his old home in the village of Sanzo, about ten kilometres distant over the hill. He was going to bring the old father and mother to their beautiful new house. He was apt to arrive at any moment.

We drove the tractor out past the barn to the edge of the field which was to be ploughed. Here we left it and returned to the house, arriving just as Signor Ghini and his parents came in.

The father was as fine a looking old bozo as I have ever seen. He was tall and blond like his son, but he was much more interesting-looking. His face had been toasted so many years in

the blazing Italian sun that it was brown and tough and wrinkled like a baked apple. He was lean but powerful, and he strode into the house with an air of dignity and grandeur that would be hard to beat. The mother also was big and strong, and her face was almost as tanned and weather-beaten as that of her husband.

Signor Ghini had told his parents to come prepared to spend the night, so they had brought a large, dilapidated valise and a small basket which held the family cat — a splendid coal-black creature by the name of Mefisto.

We all entered the house and stood around while Signor Ghini made a little speech of presentation.

At first the old patriarch and his wife couldn't understand what it was all about, but when they finally realized that this beautiful place was all their own, their faces lighted up with broad smiles of childlike delight. They grabbed their son and hugged him and kissed him with gratitude, and then did the same to their daughter and their prospective son-in-law. Signor Ghini glowed with pleasure and satisfaction, and we all joined in with congratulations.

'I told you they'd like it,' said Gadget, 'and they do.'

'Yes,' said Signor Ghini. 'Isn't it wonderful?'

Everybody seemed completely happy, and even Mefisto, the cat, who had been let out of his basket, wandered delightedly about the room, rubbing himself against the furniture and regarding everything with a benign eye.

Signor Ghini started to take the new owners on a tour of inspection of their house, and Gadget and Marco and I slipped out to start up the tractor and get the ploughing under way. I had Marco drive the machine, and Gadget and I stood beside the field and watched the work. What a beautiful picture it was! Overhead, the brilliant blue Italian sky. In the distance, the valley of the Arno and the noble city of Florence. A little nearer, the church tower, the villas, the cypress trees and the gardens of the ancient town of Fiesole. And in the foreground, our ten-horse-power Earthworm tractor ploughing sturdily along, the very picture of efficiency and beauty.

'Look,' I said proudly, 'we have here the same thing that Signor Ghini has in his house — a combination of all that is loveliest and most beautiful in Italy and in America.'

'How true that is!' said Gadget.

After watching the ploughing for a while, Gadget and I strolled back to the house to invite the other people to come out. We found, however, that they were all helping prepare dinner in the elegant new kitchen. They invited us to stick around. We did so, and about twelve o'clock there was a fine meal on the table. Mefisto had a special plate of delicacies in the cellar.

The two old people had been doing a lot of helpless pottering around, but none of the real work. As I remarked to Gadget, they seemed to be bewildered by all the machinery and appliances. I began to wonder whether they really liked this new-fangled house, or whether they were just pretending, so as not to hurt the feelings of their son. All through the meal they talked and laughed pleasantly enough, but it seemed to me they were not entirely at their ease.

After dinner I relieved Marco, so he could have something to eat. And when he had finished, I turned the machine back to him and rejoined the rest of the people at the house. When I arrived I found that Mother Ghini was getting a mild bawling-out for having thrown the garbage down the clothes chute instead of the incinerator.

'You had better all come out and see the tractor,' I said.

'Fine,' said Signor Ghini. 'Let's go.'

He followed me out to the field, and Gadget and the sister and the boy friend also came along. The parents seemed more interested in the house, however, so we left them behind. As we watched the tractor, I delivered one of my snappiest little sales talks, proving conclusively that the Earthworm was the perfect machine for this farm.

Just as I was bringing my remarks to a close, there came a series of shouts and a very strange and very loud rattling noise from the house. We all rushed back. In the garden we found Father and Mother Ghini looking very much startled. From

inside the house there came a crashing and clattering the like of which I had never heard. I ran into the kitchen. The unholy racket seemed to be coming from the dish-washer sink. I leaped across the room and turned off the switch. The uproar stopped. I lifted the lid and peered inside at a mass of broken dishes. The rest of the company came crowding in, and before long we found out what had happened. It was very simple. As soon as father and mother found themselves alone, they decided to do a little experimental dish-washing. They put a lot of dishes into the machine. But they left out the wire basket, so all the handsome crockery was piled directly on top of the paddle wheel at the bottom. And when the paddle wheel started whirling it was just too bad.

[Note: If any of you bozos back there in Earthworm City buy one of these dish-washers — which you are very apt to do, as they are wonderful machines — you had better tell your wives to be sure to use the wire basket. Otherwise it is just like throwing the plates into a high-powered electric fan.]

After the wreckage had been cleared away, Gadget and I drifted back to see how the tractor was getting along. It was still ploughing smoothly and steadily.

'I am awfully sorry,' said Gadget, 'that they had that accident. It is too bad.'

'The guy has money,' I said; 'he can buy more dishes.'

'It isn't that,' said Gadget. 'Father and Mother Ghini aren't any too well sold on this house as it is. And it wouldn't take many accidents like that to discourage them completely. And, besides, it takes everybody's mind off our tractor demonstration. And that is very bad for us.'

'Yes,' I agreed. 'It is.'

'After all the excitement,' said Gadget, 'it is very possible that we won't be able to get any of them to come out and even look at the tractor.'

But she was wrong about that. A few moments later, Signor Ghini, with the sister and the boy friend, joined us. We were pleased to see that they were still interested in our machine.

'I am sorry you did not bring your father and mother out,' said Gadget. 'I'd like them to see this demonstration.'

'They are so much interested in the house,' said Signor Ghini, 'that they wanted to stay behind.'

'You are not afraid to leave them alone with all that unfamiliar machinery?'

'Oh, no,' he said. 'They'll be all right.'

From the direction of the house we heard loud screams and calls for assistance. Mingled with the human cries were a few frantic yowls that could only have come from Mefisto, the cat.

'Good Lord!' said Gadget. 'What have they done now?'

We all ran as fast as we could, but by the time we reached the house the calls for help had ceased. All was quiet. Not a person was to be seen. We entered the kitchen. Nobody was there. We went through the rest of the house, looking in cupboards, under beds—everywhere. No result. Everything was in order; nothing, apparently, had been disturbed; but there was no sign of the Ghini parents. And there was no trace of Mefisto.

'They called for help,' said Signor Ghini. 'They were in trouble. They needed assistance. Where are they?'

We inspected the cellar, but found nothing.

'We've got to find them!' said Signor Ghini. 'And we've got to hurry! This may be serious!'

We went out into the garden. We peered under the rose-bushes. We looked over the terrace. No trace of father. No trace of mother. No trace of Mefisto.

By this time the neighbours had begun to appear. They had heard the bloodcurdling cries for help, and had come to see what was the matter. The first arrival was a little fat man from next door. He had big black moustaches. Behind him came two elderly ladies, a small boy and a couple of dogs, but none of them seemed to be able to do anything but ask foolish questions and rush hither and thither about the garden and add to the general excitement.

Signor Ghini became more and more agitated. 'We've got to do something,' he kept repeating. 'We've got to do something.'

But none of us could think of anything much to do. At last a couple of *carabinieri* arrived. Under their direction a number of searching parties were organized. The news of the strange disappearance spread, and there were plenty of volunteer helpers. With a force of at least a hundred people we worked hard all afternoon, beating around through the beautiful gardens, vineyard, fields, roads and lanes on all the slopes about Fiesole. But all without any result whatever. The old couple and the black cat had vanished without leaving a trace.

At six o'clock Gadget and Marco and I returned here to the hotel, leaving the search in the hands of the authorities and the numerous volunteers. We had some thought of going back this evening, but decided that they had plenty of help and that we would not be needed.

I have been spending the evening writing this report. Naturally, there has been no chance for us to discuss tractors with Signor Ghini, so I will have to close without letting you know whether or not we have any chance to make a sale. So no more at present from your tired salesman,

ALEXANDER BOTTS.

ALEXANDER BOTTS

EUROPEAN REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE EARTHWORM TRACTOR
HOTEL MINERVA, FLORENCE, ITALY.

—
Thursday,
September 27, 1928.

MR. GILBERT HENDERSON,
EARTHWORM TRACTOR COMPANY,
EARTHWORM CITY, ILLINOIS.

Dear Henderson: While we were eating breakfast this morning, who should walk in on us but Signor Taddeo Ghini himself.

'Well,' he said, as he sank wearily into a chair, 'we found them at last.'

'Are they all right?' asked Gadget.

'They are,' he said.

'What happened? Where are they?'

'It is very disappointing,' said Signor Ghini.

'But what happened?'

'It is a bit complicated. You remember Mefisto?'

'The big black cat?' Gadget asked him.

'Yes,' said Signor Ghini.

'Did you find him too?' asked Gadget.

'We did.'

'And he's all right?'

'He's all right now. But yesterday he had a little accident. Probably you remember that we gave him a big meal down the cellar. When he finished he probably felt a bit sleepy. He began looking for a good place to take a nap. And he discovered those towels that I had left in the drying compartment of the washing machine. So he jumped in. And that is where he made a mistake.'

'How so?'

'He is a big, clumsy brute,' explained Signor Ghini. 'When he leaped into the drying compartment he must have bumped into the hinged cover in such a way that he knocked it shut after him. The cover has a spring catch. So there was Mefisto — inside the machine, with no way to get out.'

'But if that's all that happened,' said Gadget, 'I don't see——'

'That isn't all,' said Signor Ghini. 'When Mefisto woke up from his nap and found he was a prisoner he began mewing gently but pitifully. My father and mother heard him and went down the cellar to see what was the matter. They tried to open the cover, but they are not used to machinery and they made an error.'

'What did they do?'

'They monkeyed around, trying to release the catch. And before they realized what they were doing they had turned on the electric switch and started the dryer rotating.'

'With the cat in there?'

'Yes,' said Signor Ghini. 'Unfortunately for him, Mefisto was in the dryer. And it certainly took him for a ride. What a whirl he must have had.'

'Did it kill him?' asked Gadget.

'Oh, no. You can't kill a cat so easy as that. But he didn't like it. It was then that he set up the frantic yowling that we heard away out in the field. My parents shouted for help and worked on the machine as fast and as furious as they could. They finally succeeded in getting the current turned off and the lid opened.'

'And they took Mefisto out?'

'They didn't have to. He came out himself. And my parents say that never have they seen that animal so active. He bounded out so vigorously that he almost hit the ceiling. And as soon as he landed on the floor he started travelling.'

'Where did he go?'

'At first he didn't go anywhere. He had plenty of strength and energy, but apparently he was so dizzy he couldn't co-ordinate his movements very well. All he could do was circle around and around on the cellar floor at an amazing speed. But finally he shot up the cellar stairs, did a couple of figure eights in the kitchen, skidded out the door, veered and looped through the shrubbery, and finally worked his way around the house and out into the road in front.'

'And what were your father and mother doing all this time?' asked Gadget.

'They were following, trying to catch him. But he was too quick and his course was too shift. By the time he reached the road, he could handle himself a little better. He was still doing ellipses and parabolas from time to time, but his general direction took him straight down the road. And this all happened so fast that Mefisto and my father and mother were some distance away by the time we reached the house. That is why we missed them. And as the road is hidden by stone walls, none of the neighbours saw them either.'

'Did they finally catch the poor animal?'

'Yes. Before long he began to get tired and they grabbed him. They sat down under a tree and held him in their arms and petted him. And before long he was all right again. But my father and mother were completely discouraged. They decided not to come back, for fear I would try to persuade them to stay in the new place. They took Mefisto and walked all the way back to their old home at Sanzo. I found them there last night, very much refreshed by their little hike, and tickled to death to get home again. And Mefisto was as happy as they were.'

'We are awfully glad to hear it,' said Gadget. 'Everything is all right again.'

'I wouldn't say that,' said Signor Ghini. 'Of course, it's a great relief to find them safe and sound. But I am a very disappointed man, Mrs. Botts. A very disappointed man.'

'How so?'

'My parents have decided that they would never be happy in the new house. They say it would be too much trouble for them to try to learn how to run all the machinery. They have always lived in the old home at Sanzo, and they say they are too old to change.'

'So it's all off?' asked Gadget.

'It's all off,' he answered sadly. 'Perhaps these upper-crust people are right, and it is a mistake to give luxuries to what they call the lower classes.'

'Boloney!' said Gadget. 'The only trouble with your parents is that they are so old they are set in their ways. Their position in society has nothing to do with it. If they belong to the lower classes, so do you, and so do I, and my husband, and your sister, and that young guy she goes around with. But we all appreciate good things. If you don't believe it, just offer that house to your sister, and see what she says.'

'As a matter of fact,' said Signor Ghini, 'I offered it to her this morning, and she took it. She and her husband will move in next month, right after their wedding. They are both so crazy

about the place that I decided it would be better to give it to them than to sell it to strangers.'

'Good for you!' said Gadget. 'The more I see of you, the more I like you.'

'As long as I am giving a present,' continued Signor Ghini, 'I might as well do it right. So I am going to buy your tractor to go along with the place.'

'Splendid!' said Gadget. 'My regard for you increases all the time. In my opinion you are a credit both to Italy and to America.'

And I may add that this opinion is concurred in by

Yours truly.

The Threshing Ring

BY LEO L. WARD

(From *The Midland*)

LARRY MARTIN, the station-master at Flora, stood with a hand shading his eyes in the door of the little dull green station. Scattered in little groups along the platform were the blue shirts and wide straw hats of many farmers. The men were gazing into the distance where they could see nothing except the glint and quiver of the two rails which joined and disappeared just before they reached the cleft in the bluish line of woods a half mile away on the prairie.

'Forty-eight just left Shelby,' the station-master was saying in a loud, hearty voice meant for everybody on the platform. 'Ought to be comin' any minute now. Phelps over at Shelby said she pulled out of there already.' There was a short silence; then a murmur of eager talk swept along the station platform. 'Yeah, yeah, there she is! Smoke up there in the woods now. And she's coalin' hard, looks like. I tell you, boys, haulin' threshing machines, takes coal for that.' Larry Martin's loose blue shirt quivered as he chuckled and looked at three or four farmers standing near him on the platform. All the squinted faces in front of the station suddenly broke into pleased grins.

'About the first threshin' rig you ever unloaded, ain't it, Larry?' It was Jay Westwright who spoke in an even, controlled tone from where he stood beside the station-master. Westwright was a tall, straight man, with a strip of greyish hair showing beneath his wide hat on either side of his long, thin face.

'Yeah, first threshing rig we ever put down here. What is it? Red River, didn't you say?'

'Yeah, Red River Special. Farmer's Friend, they call it.' Jay's long face turned to gaze proudly up the track again.

A short distance up the platform and out at the very curb,

stood a little man with a slight bump high on his back. This was Burl Teeters, and he was gazing very fixedly and very thoughtfully up the track, his sweat-stained straw hat tilted far back on his little bald head and his hands shoved deeply into his belt. Beside him were the two Hamel boys, both also looking into the distance. Burl seemed to pay no attention to the excited talk going on all about him, except to throw an occasional scowl over his shoulder when Jay Westwright was talking. From time to time Lar and Zeb Hamel turned bearded faces to listen to what the station-master was saying.

'Where you goin' to set her down, Larry?' Jay Westwright asked. 'Marley Simms over at the elevator said we could get all the water we wanted right there at the engine room. Wonder if we could set her down over there beside the engine room.'

'Sure, Jay. We'll set that rig down just anywhere you boys want.'

'Think that would give us room, Mr. Kenyon? Right in there between the grain office and the engine room.' It was in a quiet, respectful tone that Westwright asked the question of a youngish but serious looking man who stood beside him. The youngish man wore a pair of neat blue overalls, above the bib of which a white collar and a narrow dark tie showed. He was Mr. Kenyon, the expert who had arrived yesterday from the factory.

'Yes, that will be all right. That will give us plenty of room.' Kenyon spoke in a firm, quiet voice, and with a thin, quick smile.

'It's a pretty big machine though, ain't it?' asked Larry Martin. Everybody turned again at the sound of the station-master's loud voice — everybody except Burl Teeters, who had now moved a few steps farther up the platform.

'Yeah, it's a forty-five inch rig,' Jay said. 'Thirty, forty-five, of course. Had to be that big for a ring our size.'

'Well now, if that ain't enough room. . . .'

'Oh yes, that will be plenty of room, boys — plenty.' The youngish man in the neat blue overalls shook his head decisively.

Inside the station a thin insistent ringing suddenly drowned the monotonous chatter of the telegraph, and the station-master

as he turned to the door with a wave of his black satin half-sleeve, shouted back to everyone on the platform, 'Well, there she is, boys. She's comin' right in.'

The wild, prolonged shrill of a whistle came from up the tracks. Little clusters of men edged farther out on the platform, and there was a murmur of subdued talk. Piggy Bailey jumped down from his perch beside a striped canvas mail bag on the station truck, and pushed the truck out to the low curb of the platform, where he stood with one arm resting jauntily on the mail bag as the tall black bulk of the engine came rolling and grinding toward the station. The little clusters of men suddenly shrank back closer to the station as the engine came nearer.

Piggy Bailey was shouting at the engineer. 'Got any thrashin' machines on this here train? We don't want nothin' smaller than thrashin' machines in this man's town.' The engineer merely waved a big glove genially as the engine went hissing and grinding past the station.

The crowd, which had become quite silent, was now watching the box cars go swaying slowly past, one after another. At last a glint of shiny steel appeared above the red top of a box car. Then everybody suddenly saw the hood of a threshing blower, and a moment later the threshing machine loomed beside the station platform. As the cars moved slowly past, the threshing engine became sharp and black against the blue sky and the separator incredibly huge and shiny. The flat car came slowly to a stop, blocking the street that ran past the station. Then the men — all except Westwright, Kenyon, the station-master and Piggy Bailey — began pushing and pulling each other off the platform into the street. Soon a chorus of jumbled talk arose out around the flat car.

A trainman came running along the tracks. Larry Martin was shouting to him to set the threshing machine over beside the elevator. In just a little while a series of clankings came along the cars, and the whole train seemed to shudder once or twice. Then the great black engine and the red, shiny separator moved slowly away from the station on the long flat car.

It was only a short time, however, before the threshing machine came floating back on the side tracks with a brakeman riding in front of it. Then Burl Teeters went hopping across the two sets of tracks toward the engine room at the elevator where he began waving directions to the brakeman. With a shriek of brakes the long flat car came to a stop just beyond the low red engine room.

A moment later Burl was clambering over the edge of the car. Though his hat fell backwards on to the tracks, he seemed not to notice it. Now he was up on the car. Without his big hat he looked ridiculously small beside the tall wheels of the threshing engine. He edged his way around one of the great wheels. Suddenly he reached up, grasped the flange of the big steel belt wheel and tugged at it violently once or twice. The wheel turned slightly, and Burl stood back looking at it quizzically as though only half satisfied. Then Piggy Bailey whistled shrilly through his teeth from the station platform. The whistle came clear and high above the mumble of talk from the crowd now gathered about the flat car. 'Hey there,' Piggy was shouting, 'Hey, Burl, you the engineer? Thought you were goin' to be blower man.' Burl grinned, a bit sheepishly. The crowd laughed. Then Burl shouted back at Piggy, 'No sir, I'm the engineer on this rig. I'm not no blower man.' He turned again to examine the engine. Then he climbed up to the high seat on the tool box. With one hand on the steering wheel, he pushed a lever with the other. Now someone shouted at him again. 'What do you think of her, Burl? Hey, Burl, think she'll run all right?' It was Ambrose Mull, a huge man with faded green suspenders curving tight over his blue stomach, who stood half way across the tracks. Ambrose chuckled to himself and turned to grin at Jay Westwright back on the station platform. Burl seemed at first to pay no attention to the shouting, but finally he turned to yell over his shoulder, 'Yeah, guess maybe she'll run all right.' Then he started climbing down from the engine, but stopped to open the fire box and peer inside. When at last he was on the ground he turned to Bert Helker, a tall man with slouched shoulders, and

one of the Hamels, who was standing very near the car, and pointed a crooked outstretched thumb up at the engine. He was telling them that the only trouble might be the boiler. It didn't seem built back over the fire box quite far enough. 'But I reckon it'll work good enough. Work all right if you get the right feller firin' it.'

Soon there were many men working busily about the flat car. Kenyon, the expert, was over there now, and he was explaining to the men how to brace some huge timbers against the car. But above all the other noises, the hammering and talking and laughing, came the shrill voice of Burl Teeters in almost constant questions and suggestions. He kept asking Kenyon particularly whether he thought the timbers were large enough for 'an engine as big as that.'

After a little while Jay Westwright and the station-master came slowly across the tracks from the platform, the station-master carrying a piece of paper in his hand. Then Kenyon moved out from among the men, and the three stood talking together in the shade of a maple tree over beside the grain office, while the work went steadily on about the flat car.

But Burl also left the car and went over to the three men standing beside the grain office. He faced Westwright. 'Well,' he said, 'how about some coal, Mr. Jay? Ain't you supposed to be gettin' the coal? A man can't fire no engine on hot air.'

'The coal'll be here in plenty of time. Don't you be worryin' about the coal, Teeters.'

'Yeah! You think you're runnin' the whole works. Well, I'll tell you one thing you're not runnin'. An' that's the engine. I'm the one that's runnin' that engine.' Burl's voice, as always when he grew excited or angry, had risen so shrill and high that it was almost like a frantic tinkle above the noises back around the flat car.

Jay Westwright's thin face became still narrower and very hard, then slowly broke into a faint grin as he turned to continue talking to Kenyon. Burl wheeled about contemptuously and went back toward the other men.

The lifting and bracing and wedging of the great beams went steadily on, amidst the constant loud talk and the shouted laughter of the men. But it was almost two hours later before the threshing outfit, by means of several heavy ropes and pulleys, was finally got off the flat car.

And it was now standing out in the street, directly in front of the grain office. Wisps of steam were playing about the clean new cylinders, and black smoke was tumbling up lazily from the wide funnel of the engine over the street and across the roof of the grain office. Kenyon, the expert, stood between the engine and the separator, with one foot resting on the big red separator tongue, while he talked briskly with Jay Westwright and Bert Helker. He was asking about Teeters, whether they were going to let him try to run the engine, and Jay was saying that Burl could probably learn to run it all right, if Mr. Kenyon would just keep a close watch on him for a while. It would be easier than trying to stop him from going on the engine, once he got it in his head this way. Bert Helker's wide hat rim flapped agreement with Jay. But already Burl was up on the high platform of the engine, bent forward examining the water gauge. By this time a large group of men had gathered on the sidewalk in front of the grain office, and on both sides of the street little clusters of women, and clerks in aprons, stood watching the threshing machine.

Suddenly the brass whistle on the engine spurted steam. There was a deafening blast. With Kenyon standing just behind him on the engine platform, Burl Teeters slowly pulled a lever and the big belt wheel began to race idly. A moment later the engine moved forward with a great clank. The separator lurched once or twice. And then the threshing machine was going up the street under a cone of dense black smoke. Burl Teeters kept turning the steering wheel, now one way, now the other. The low, wide wheels of the separator wandered slightly to the right, then back to the middle of the street again, and as the great machine moved on, the lugs of the engine wheels left a waving track behind them. From the door of the butcher shop

Hunk Keller in his splotched white apron shouted to Burl above the puffing of the engine and the rumble of the separator. 'Hold her down there, Burl. You better watch the speed limit.' Farther up the street Joe Neff, standing on the kerb in front of the pool room, lifted his shrill, whining voice to ask, 'Where's your firin' cap, Burl? An' say, you ought to wear gloves for that. Where's your gloves, Burl?' Burl Teeters seemed hardly to hear the shouting, but only turned from time to time to say something to Kenyon, whose eyes never left the engine all the way up the street.

The threshing machine had soon passed from between the two rows of little wooden store buildings and had entered the lane of dense maple trees beyond. Through the trees the smoke floated upward, fading into the clear blue sky above Flora. At last it was becoming smaller and smaller out at the end of the street, and then on the road that led away from the town. But some of the men in front of the stores kept watching the threshing machine until it was only a black dot out in the level haze of the wheatfields.

*

The threshing was beginning at Bert Helker's place, for Bert was at the north end of the ring and it was his turn this year. They had started in the afternoon when the grain would be quite dry, and by two o'clock they had already threshed off four loads of bundles.

Now two more wagons pulled in very close to the sides of the machine and the men began pitching the sheaves off their tall loads on to the conveyer, where the sheaves went leaping, one after another, into the dusty mouth of the separator, to be swallowed behind the flashing knives which fed the cylinder. In a little while three or four other loads came up, to await their turn back behind the engine. The drivers all climbed down from their wagons and gathered in the shade of one of the loads, where they watched the threshing with pleased grins on their faces.

Over beside the engine stood one of the Hamel boys; leaning on a pitchfork and talking to Burl Teeters, who sat, bent far forward, on the high box of the engine, directly behind the big belt wheel. Burl was wearing a little black cap with a celluloid peak. With one hand resting lightly on a tilted lever, he watched the separator closely, giving only occasional quick glances down at Hamel as he answered a question or asked the other man how he liked the 'exack line on that belt there.' Burl's eye followed the belt intently, where it dipped and twisted and came racing and flashing constantly back to the whirling drive wheel directly in front of him. Once he leaned far out and down toward Hamel, and with one hand pointing to the big belt wheel said, 'See that belt there, Zeb — right in the same place on that wheel all the time. Tell you y' got to keep a good line on a belt for that.' Then he quickly pulled himself up on his seat again, and the little black cap was craned far forward as before.

Up at the other end of the racing belt, the two men at the engine could see the big red separator only as a great blur of dust. Beyond that the flashing hood of the blower was belching forth its clotted stream of dust and straw in a slow semi-circle. But high above the nearer blur of dust, three men stood together on top of the tall separator. They were Kenyon, the expert, Jay Westwright, and Bert Helker. They were gazing into the dust below them, at the wheels and belts, and the sheaves that kept leaping into the mouth of the separator. From time to time Kenyon and Westwright shouted to each other above the noise of the machine, and Kenyon made frantic gestures, while Bert Helker listened curiously and nodded his straw hat until its wide brim would begin to flap. At last Kenyon leaned very close to the other two men and again shouted above the roaring whir beneath him. Westwright's and Helker's straw hats were tossed upward as if in laughter, and Kenyon lifted his hand to slap Jay on the back. But suddenly Kenyon reeled violently backward. He saved himself from falling from the top of the separator by frantically grasping Westwright's arm with his uplifted hand. Westwright himself staggered, and Helker

had fallen in a clump where he stood. The separator had suddenly lurched under them, had literally jumped and then fallen back under them with a dull, loud clank.

There was wild shouting everywhere. But the three men on the separator did not hear it. They heard only the great clank of the machine beneath them, and then a sharp snap, followed by a clap as of thunder very near them, just in front of the separator itself. At the same instant Kenyon saw what seemed to be the broken end of a belt flying through the sky above him; while Jay Westwright saw two wagons turning rapidly in sharp circles away from the machine. Now the moan and whir of the machine suddenly ceased, and the men on the separator again heard the wild shouting of other men all about them. Then Kenyon, the expert, and Jay Westwright, the shrewd leader of his neighbours, and Bert Helker, who was curious and indolent above most men in this world, saw an extremely strange and monstrous thing. They saw the great black nose of the threshing engine coming straight toward them. Close below them now, directly in front of the separator, they heard the quick panting of the engine. The next moment Kenyon, the expert, was only a blur of arms and legs waving and tossing through the air—he had jumped from the top of the separator. The tall form of Bert Helker had shrunk into a ball on the high back of the separator. And now Jay Westwright was stepping backward in stiff jerks until he almost fell over Helker crouching behind him. Jay stopped rigidly, legs braced wide, one long arm stretched out desperately as if to defend himself, his narrow face lengthened into a stricken stare. Then he heard again the quick, sharp pant of the engine. He saw black tumbling smoke. For an instant he smelt hot grease and steam. . . .

He remembered, an indefinite while later, having seen a sudden glint of something beside him, almost beneath him . . . like the shifting, shiny flash of a piston. . . . And something huge and dark had passed by him. And nothing had hit the separator. There had been no terrific bump, no crashing of any kind. . . .

Suddenly he knew he could see more clearly. He turned his head slowly, tautly sidewise. What he saw was strangely real and clear. It was the threshing engine moving rapidly away, circling out from the separator. As it moved away he saw somebody running after it. And he heard someone shouting wildly. He heard many men shouting.

The engine was stopped now. It was stopped out there beyond the low yellow slope of the straw stack. And Kenyon, the expert, was standing on the engine. One of Kenyon's hands was on a lever and his head was turned sharply toward the small humped figure of Burl Teeters on the platform beside him. But Burl's arms were folded lightly and the shiny peak of his little black cap was pushed carelessly up on his forehead as he stood there looking impertinently up into Kenyon's face. Neither of the two men was speaking at all, but simply staring at the other, until finally Kenyon turned abruptly to the levers and started the engine. He was soon bringing the engine around in a wide circle, and was half way back to the separator when Teeters burst into a wild shrieking almost in his ear. Above the loud rumble and pant of the engine there would occasionally rise a shrill word or two . . . 'belt loose . . . tighten it . . . push too far. . . .' Though Kenyon hardly seemed to hear all this, when at last he had brought the engine to a stop back near the separator Burl was still yelling into his ear. He seemed to be saying something about a 'lever slippin'.' Kenyon, apparently not listening at all, looked critically down at the broken belt that lay twisted and sprawling along the ground. Several other men came slowly up. One after another they looked at the belt, then doubtfully up at Kenyon, then back at the belt again. Then every face suddenly turned again toward Burl Teeters, who was now leaning far out over the engine's tool-box and shaking his short arm up at Jay Westwright, who still stood on top of the separator. Burl was all but screaming at Westwright, in a voice that sounded more than ever like the wild tinkling of a little bell. 'Now you're satisfied, eh?' He kept repeating this almost in the same words.

Jay Westwright's head jerked backward. He looked at first startled, then bewildered. But slowly his long face shortened in a sneer, only to widen finally in a look of mingled contempt and pity.

Then with a quick leap Burl was on the ground. He came toward the separator in a half run and stopped just below the end of the conveyor. The yelling began again. 'What you have to say about it? I'm just darin' you to say somethin'. I just dare you.'

Finally Jay started to answer, and Burl stopped abruptly in a challenging silence. Jay's voice was strangely calm and steady. 'No, I ain't got nothin' to say, Burl. I ain't sayin' anything to you. You just be quiet, an' let's not have any trouble. 'Nough trouble, as it is.'

Burl stepped back from the separator a pace or two, then burst into a thin, piercing laugh. The laughter continued, growing higher and more shrill until at last it suddenly dropped to a sort of jerky cackle. Then Burl's face became smaller and menacing as he said, 'Yeah, you won't say anything! You don't dare, that's what you don't. You don't dare say anything about my runnin' that engine. It's your fault anyway, an' you know it. You bought that engine an' you got slippin' levers, that's what you did. That's what caused all this.' Burl's short crooked arm straightened a little as it swept the belt lying on the ground. 'I ain't goin' to have nothin' to do with it. It's your fault anyways, 'taint mine. Buyin' that engine . . . it was all your doin's. Now just fix her up if you want to. That's what you can do.'

Burl Teeters turned from the separator and started walking away in the direction of Bert Helker's barn up beyond the pasture. The slight bow in his legs seemed very wide as he went on with a kind of short stamping stride. Half way to the barn he wheeled about and suddenly yelled back wildly at Jay Westwright, 'If I hear of you sayin' anything. . . .' His voice rose so shrill it became unintelligible. He turned again and went on toward the barn. And a little while later the men standing about

the threshing machine saw Burl leave Bert Helker's farmyard in a buggy amidst a cloud of dust that kept following the buggy until it was beyond the hedge at the other side of the orchard.

That evening Jay Westwright, Kenyon, Ambrose Mull and three or four other men who had come over to Bert's after their chores, sat smoking and talking around the feedway door of Bert's barn. Kenyon and Westwright were seated in the doorway. Bert Helker sat on a milk stool in front of them, and the others were squatting about on the ground amidst a litter of corn cobs that had been thrown out from the feed boxes. Occasionally a glow would come to the end of Kenyon's cigar, and then the glow would drop to his knee. The lights from three or four pipes kept brightening now and again.

'So you don't think it'd do any good to splice it, Mr. Kenyon?' Bert Helker asked.

'No, wouldn't do a bit of good.' There was a prolonged glow at the end of Kenyon's cigar. 'Splicin' couldn't fix it. That belt was ripped, if you noticed. All along one side. And splicin' wouldn't do a ripped belt any good. Can't. Fabric's gone. Splicin' can't fix fabric like that.'

'Looks like they ain't no way out of it. We'll just have to lay off a day.' Jay Westwright spoke in a tone of reasoned finality.

'Yes. It'll take a day anyway to get a new belt in here. Even with telegraphing for it right off like I did there this afternoon.'

'Funny, but I don't think I see yet just how he did it exactly, Mr. Kenyon.' Bert Helker's head lolled slightly to one side as he looked at Kenyon and asked the question.

'Well, as I was tellin' you boys there this afternoon, just after he stamped off like that. . . .' Ambrose Mull, whose fat shoulders leaned back against the barn, started to laugh, and the others followed him. Even after the other men had stopped, Ambrose still chuckled gutturally to himself over beside the door. 'As I was saying this afternoon Teeters must have been monkeyin' with the levers. It's the only thing that could have caused it. Of course you heard him tryin' to make out the lever slipped.'

Kenyon broke into a short, dry laugh, but none of the other men laughed now. They were all listening intently and silently, all except Ambrose Mull who was still chuckling. 'Why, a lever couldn't slip like that. No sir, not on a Red River engine it couldn't.'

'Yeah, I kind of think I see now,' Bert Helker said slowly. 'He just kind of pulled a lever, and then maybe pushed it too much. Got excited like when the belt broke. And as consequence. . . .'

'Exactly. He was just itchin' around the levers there. Couldn't keep his hands off them. Pulled one ju-u-ust a little, you know. Course the engine started to backin', nacherly. Then the belt snapped, you see. And then — then he got good and scared, and pushed the lever. Probably pushed it clear over. And then . . . well, the next thing we knew that engine was comin' straight for the separator. And boys, how it ever missed that separator is more than I know. Some things are just queer, that's all — I've always said that. Simply no way of explainin' them. And it sure seems like that was one of them, right there this afternoon. . . .'

Kenyon was silent for a while, shaking his head solemnly while he looked down at the ground between his knees. Bert Helker on his milk stool pulled at his chin with a big hand. Ambrose Mull did not chuckle now, but only breathed laboriously over beside the door.

At last Kenyon's cigar glowed again, and he said, 'Boys, I tell you if that engine had hit that separator. . . .' He paused. 'Well, it wouldn't just mean gettin' a new belt. Why, if you used it for kindlin' there wouldn't be enough of that separator left to start a fire in the morning.'

In the stillness that followed, the dusk seemed to become instantly darker. In the west, very low and far away, only a faint blush was left along the sky. The men sat for a while in silence, watching, watching this patch of light.

At last Kenyon stirred as if to get up from where he was sitting in the doorway, then with one hand grasping the jamb

of the door he said in a matter of fact tone, 'Well, I reckon we've lost an engineer anyway.'

'No sir.' Bert Helker had spoken up impulsively. 'He'll be right back here, Mr. Kenyon. You wait an' see if he ain't.'

Ambrose Mull started sputtering and wheezing over beside the door. 'Why, I'll bet ya he'll be right back here in the mornin' again, first thing. Sure as daylight he will. I tell ya, you don't know them Teeterses, Mr. Kenyon. Ya can't, unless you live right over there beside 'em like I do. Oh, I knows 'em, ever' last one of 'em. Knowed their dad afore 'em. An' they're all just the same. The whole lot of 'em always tryin' things they ain't got no business at. Messin' things all up ever' time. But you can't tell 'em nothin'. Can't never tell a Teeters nothin'. They're all half crazy, that's what they are. An' Burl, he's just about the worst of the whole keeboodle.'

Another deep voice sounded, detached, as though the speaker were talking to himself, as it came out of the dusk before the barn. 'Yeah, Teeters'll be back around that engine again. I just knows he will.'

After a moment Kenyon spoke up again, speaking in a helpless, complaining tone. 'But boys, what we goin' to do? Can't have that fellow back on that engine again.'

'Yes, but you'll never keep him off, Mr. Kenyon,' said Jay Westwright. 'He'll cause no end of rumpus to all the rest of the ring if we try it.'

'Why, there ought to be some way of gettin' rid of him. We've just got to keep him away from that machine, boys.'

'Can't never do it, Mr. Kenyon,' Jay Westwright said, and Bert Helker repeated it.

'You never can,' Bert said. 'No use talkin'. You can't keep him away nohow. He's bound to be back.'

'But couldn't you just kind of ease him out some way? Maybe get him out of the ring some way. Might buy up his share in the machine, boys. Couldn't you do that?'

'Oh, I don't know, Mr. Kenyon,' said Jay. 'I don't hardly think we'd ought to push him out of the ring that way. Don't

see how we could do it very easy even if we wanted to. He wouldn't sell his share to none of us. Wouldn't sell it now anyways.'

'No,' Bert Helker said, 'I don't see how we could do that, Mr. Kenyon. Don't think the boys'd want to put him out exactly.'

Then Jay's voice came in slow, measured tones. 'Fact, there's only one way I see of doin' it. I know it'll be mighty awkward, but the only way I see is for you to stay right around that engine. Just practically run it yourself, Mr. Kenyon. It's the only thing I see we can do.'

'Well, you boys ought to know best, of course,' said Kenyon. 'It will make it kind of bad. I'd ought to be up around the separator most of the time. But if that's the way you boys look at it I suppose it's the only way. You know, I want to be accommodating. That's what I'm here for. I want you boys to be satisfied.'

'That's about the only way we can do it, Mr. Kenyon — the way Jay said,' said Bert Helker. 'Fer he'll be right back here, wantin' to run that engine again, sure as shootin'. You can't stop Burl Teeters, onct he gets somethin' like that in his head. An' he won't forget it either, like you might think after this afternoon. No way under blue heaven a gettin' it out a his head. He's a Teeters, that's all, just as Ambrose says.'

There was absolute silence for a while. Then away on the prairie, from the direction of the patch of light at the edge of the sky, there arose a thin, distant calling. The voice seemed very far away, yet it came very clear through the damp dusk.

Ambrose Mull grunted. 'There he is now. That's him, I hearn him lots a times like that. It's just like him. That's a Teeters for you, callin' his hogs this time a night when ever' body else has his chorin' done an' forgot about it a couple hours ago.' Ambrose snorted and grunted a few times, and then was silent. Kenyon suddenly laughed, very briefly and as though to himself.

The thin distant calling continued, and now it seemed to

be growing constantly clearer and stronger as it came out of the dusk. The men sat for a while, silently listening. Moment after moment the calling grew still clearer and louder. But it was shrill and thin, somehow like an impudent, insistent challenge too distant to be answered at all.

Suddenly Jay Westwright rose impatiently to his feet. The others were getting up now, one after another, Ambrose Mull puffing and wheezing as he did so. Ambrose's puffing was the only sound made by any of the men, except a scuffling of feet and a light rattle of corn-cobs here and there on the ground. The faint distant calling came again, more distinct than before. Then Jay Westwright's voice, lifted slightly as if with irritation, seemed to be saying something about a belt. Kenyon made some vague answer about 'losing only a day or two.' Other voices out in front of the barn were moving away slowly. But above the mutter and mumble of voices the thin calling continued to come, shrill and clear.

In a little while two or three buggies and one Ford were leaving Bert Helker's farmyard. The rattle of wheels and the quick fluttering purr of a small motor soon died away. Then the calling could be heard again, and it seemed even more distinct than it had yet been, a thin distant ringing that pierced the darkness which was settling everywhere over the prairie.

The Miracle

BY ANNE ELIZABETH WILSON

(From *Scribner's Magazine*)

TOM,' growled the General, who was still lying abed, 'what the devil are you mumbling about?'

Tom Hodge, one of the blackest and also one of the most indestructible of the Darnell niggers, straightened his back from the business of fire-laying to look languidly toward the four-poster. 'I ain't feelin' so good dis mornin', suh. Mighty nigh didn't git here 'tall.'

The General's eyes lifted with faint interest. 'Where's your misery now?' he inquired. 'And you might pull the curtains.'

'No immejiate misery, suh,' replied Tom with hesitant dignity, 'only — well, you know dat consarned black bull, suh?'

'Merely by sight,' snapped the bed's occupant, shaking off the comforter.

'De fac' is,' pursued Tom, almost unwilling, 'de fac' is, de dutty varmint done killed me daid.'

The General's face smoothed out into an utter absence of expression. 'Indeed?' he nodded.

Tom bowed slightly. 'Yassuh,' he confirmed the statement, 'fo' five minutes.'

The sweet damp of a Kentucky morning was blowing in through the half-open windows, but the fire had begun to cast its warmth. Tom continued to dig it solicitously.

"Twas 'twixt de woodhouse an' de kitchen, 'bout six to-day,' he went on to explain, 'as I wuz jes' easin' de wheelbarrow roun' de cistern fo' to dump it by de do', when lippity splick, I heahs de cloven hoof.'

'The devil?' inquired the General.

'Yassuh; guess it twuz.'

"Did you die *then*?"

'Not *dat* time,' Tom admitted, 'but 'twuz right den and dere I denied de wheelbarrow.'

'Proceed.' The voice emanated from behind the fluttering folds of a silk bedkerchief.

'Fum dat place I p'oceeded to de quarters,' Tom continued, 'but dey ain't no use axin' me how I got dere.'

'I am not inquiring.'

'Nawsuh. It was jes' like you wuz to tech a match to one dem fizz-bangs, an' den ax how come it done shift its position.'

'I understand perfectly.'

Tom nodded and swallowed. 'De fust thing *I* know, dey wuz a kind of a light wind singin' thu ma legs an' de groun' flyin' behime me. De bull he beller like to bust hisself, 'cause he knew well as I did he ain't goin' to be able to fetch up wid me lessen I let him.'

'Oh then it *was* the bull?'

'Yassuh, dat red-eyed Blackie.'

'Not tethered, eh?'

'Nawsuh; free as grass. 'Twouldn't been no p'edicament whatever though, if de groun' hadn' been wet, but de Lawd nevah made me fo' no mud ho'se.'

'I am sure of that. Continue.'

'Wall, suh, me an' Blackie went on fo' some little piece 'fo he ovehtook me. 'Fo I knew it, I wuz lyin' flat on de groun' an' he sailin' pas'. Seems like he couldn't stop up in time.'

'You were not dead?'

'Nawsuh, but I was pluralized wid feah.'

'Go on.'

'So after dat, seein' how de caht had kinda got befo' de ho'se, I lit out arfter Blackie.'

'With an eye to securing him, I presume?'

Tom hesitated as he struggled for veracity. 'Nawsuh, dat ain't exactly whut entered ma mind. Whut I calclated wuz dat if I chase him fur enough, I'd have a better chance to git away if I run in de udder direction.'

'Escape was your only motive?'

'Yassuh, escapement was ma wish. Wall, den arfter I leap' out into de pasture, Blackie he stand still kinda twistin' his tail. He lift it up and fling it down, and den wrench it backwards like as though he's tryin' to make up his min', and all de time he keep shakin' his hornery haid an' snortin' like he wuz goin' to bust loose any minute. Somepin' tole me to move back agin, so I stahts to kinda glide ma feet behime me widout takin' ma eyes offn de bull. Fuhst thing I knew, I done backed maself into de sink hole.'

'Did you die *then?*'

'Nawsuh, but I come mighty nigh it.'

'I have often spoken to you niggers about keeping the sink hole fenced around.'

'Yassuh. Seems like dey's a kind of ledge 'bout fo' feet down, and dere I stuck. Blackie come looking over de edge, an' I wuz dat sickened wid de whole fight, damn if I didn't chuck a handful of duht right splam in his face.' Tom paused in deference to the very memory of it.

'Lawdy, he wuz de *maddes*' bull I evah see!'

'Well?'

'Den de gravel begin to move sideways where I wuz holdin' on, an' I done sunk some mo'. By dat time I's so decimated wid weakness an' app'chension, dat I had to keep ma eyes shet so's not to relapse to de bottom, but I jes' had 'bout strength enough lef' to holler. 'Long 'bout half a hour later, Buck Dudley done fotch me out wid his suspenders.'

'Were you dead?'

'Nawsuh, not yit, but I was feelin' might' po'ly. Howsomever, I didn't see Blackie 'round nowhere, an' I 'lowed I wouldn't say nothin', to Buck. Eatin' seemed 'bout de bes' thing I ought to do so I mosied on back to de quarters. Oh, Lawd!'

Tom's face greyed as he called to mind the moment of that dread decision.

'Well, what's the matter; did you die *then?*'

'Yassuh, it wuz jes' 'bout dat time I begin to fail.'

The half-wet logs sputtered violently as Tom prodded them

anew. The General blew his nose desperately, and at last the narrative went on.

'Jes' as I rounded de quarters yard I seen him. Dere he wuz, madder'n Jehosophat — layin' fo' me. You'd think he wuz on wires de way he jump aroun', and his black legs as thin as tar-twine. Hes face's still duhty where I done lambaste him wid de mud outn de sink hole, an' his eyes redder'n a turtle's.'

'"Look out!" yells F'licity Samson — de yaller wench. She jes' took dat time to spy me out. "Looks like Blackie got his eye on yew.'

'Wid dat all de consarned niggers in de quarters come cranin' dey necks fo' to see whut de rumpus about, an' I breaks fo' F'licity's do'.

'Blackie, he break too. F'licity stand dere hollerin' like a Comanche an' won't git out de way. Natchely, I ain't goin' to stop and neither ain't Blackie, so I circles fo' de pasture agin. Roun' de field we goes, an' arfter I git back to de place where I reconnize de lay of de land agin, I got to goin' so fas' I cain't stop. Blackie he rampsin' along 'bout six feet behime an' de snorts he's lettin' outn him throw de sod up in lumps. "Hi!" I yells to F'licity, "by de time I runs aroun' dis fohty-acre field a couple times mo' maybe I git slowed down enough to git thu de do'."

Tom paused for the breath which even in the telling of the tale forsook him. 'Gawd a'mighty, I sho' did suffer!'

'Sit down,' sympathized the General.

'Yassuh; thank you, suh. Wall, suh, seems like once mo' roun' dat field wuz 'bout enough. F'licity she come to by dat time and git de yard cleared so's I could git a straight parf to de do', an' I bust thru. If it hadn't been fo' de wall on de udder side, I reckon I be goin' yet.'

'Doubtless.'

'I jes' fall down on de bed and lie dere. De roof wuz flyin' roun' an' de flo' heavin' like a porpoise. If you wuz to have axed me could I put up wid anything mo', I'd have cried like a bebbly.'

'Awful,' agreed the General.

'Den — den — ' Tom's voice wavered.

'Some one *asked* you,' prompted the General.

'Nawsuh, 'twuz wus'n dat. Blackie done stick his haid in de do!' He jes' stood dere fo' a minute lookin' at me, an' den he give a kind of a squat an' a flutter. . . .'

'Good Gad!'

'Yassah, an' dat's how he come to kill me daid.'

'Oh, you did die *then?*'

'Yassuh, ma heaft stopped beatin'.'

'How long did you say it stopped beating?'

'Bout — 'bout — f-i-v-e minutes.'

*

There was a brief silence. The General coughed once or twice as he turned restlessly in bed.

'Tom,' he bawled at last, 'you're a damned liar! You know as well as I do that you can't kill a Darnell nigger.'

Tom raised his eyes in woeful rebuke. 'Yassuh,' he murmured huskily. 'I 'membered dat arfter I'd been lyin' dere fo' a while. . . . De fac' is, day cain't no Darnell nigger lie up in peace knowin' yo' fire ain't made, suh. Not even if he's done daid.'

The General started. 'Tom,' he snorted, 'pour my bath. Give me my linen. And Tom. . . .'

'Yassuh?'

'Give me your hand.'

White Man's Town

BY LOWRY CHARLES WIMBERLY

(From *The Forum*)

I

YOU don't like a small town? Well, now that's odd. You can give me one every time. In a big place you can be born and grow up and marry a fortune and then die maybe and leave it all, and nobody is any the wiser or gives a damn. But in a little burg you've got everybody spotted and they've got you spotted. If there's a low-down buzzard in town, you know it. Or if there's a good man or a saint, you know that, too. You can bank on just how each person will act at a revival or a dog fight or an election. There was Deb Gurney. You always knew he'd vote Democrat and go clear off his base at a fire but show the levellest head on earth at a funeral, especially if he was related to the corpse.

Deb's grandmother on his father's side, and as nice an old lady as you'd want to see, was hit by a car and passed away the next morning without coming to. She was buried on Sunday. The church was jammed at the funeral, particularly with old-timers, and everybody bawled and bellowed and blew their noses until you couldn't help joining in. And you couldn't catch a cussed word of the sermon, for all the preacher was laying into it in a way that was enough to make the old lady rise up out of her coffin. But Deb, who was her nearest of kin and not five feet from the corpse, just sat there calmer even than the undertaker himself and didn't bat an eye. There was a stranger in town at the time, and Mell Rascom got up a bet with him on how Deb would act at the funeral. It was an ornery thing to pull on anybody, for of course the stranger lost.

That only goes to show how well you have things sized up in a small place. But now and then something comes along and

stumps you no matter how much you sit around trying to figure it out. It was Lum Zither that got me guessing — and still has, for that matter.

You say you've been over in my town lately and was wanting to ask me about Lum? Now, that is odd, ain't it, when you think I was just going to tell you about him? No, I reckon there's nothing much you can do for me, mister. Thanks, anyway. It ain't so bad here. The warden's been good enough. Anyhow, I'm satisfied. That is, except for trying to get this thing straightened out.

Sometimes it looks as clear as day, and then again it's all foggy and jumbled up. And I lay awake nights until people from over at my town appear to be sitting around in my head, so to speak, shoving their chairs about and trying to jabber their way through the fog. I reckon, I jabber, too, mister, and it may be I'd go crazy if there wasn't one idea that I get clear enough. It's an idea I always wind up with and that I try to keep hanging on to. What is the idea? It's this. I couldn't take any chances. I had to do what I did. You would have done the same even if you knew you'd swing for it, just as I've got to. As I say, I couldn't take any chances any more than any other white man could have.

II

Lum was my best friend, the only real one, I reckon, that I ever had. He grew up in my town from a kid, but he was adopted from way off South somewhere. The Zithers claimed they had all the papers on him, and I expect they did have. Anyway, when he was around twenty they died and he got everything they owned, which wasn't much — a patch of ground and a shack down by the river. It wasn't long, though, before the river ate the land away and left only the shack. But the shack was enough. You couldn't have hired Lum to work the ground.

Now, that's just what I thought. When you was over there you heard considerable rot about him. And all that talk about

his hair is part of the rot. The truth is, mister, that his hair was only full of little curls, of a shiny black, that played around over his head, as you might say, and halfway down to his shoulders. Nobody but a fool would call it kinky. And he was good-looking, Lum was. His rags and tatters couldn't hide the fact. You took to him the minute you saw him. 'He's got good eyes,' you'd say. Or maybe it was his loafish ways that drew you, or his banjo and his singing. Many a night you could hear his voice come rolling up off the river, strong and velvety. He was the most good-natured and no-account cuss you ever saw, the finest person in the world to be around with.

Dark? Sure he was, but not a damn bit darker than I am, or you, mister, begging your pardon. Say, do you suppose I'd have fished and drank with him, ate and even slept with him, lived with him, you might say, down there in his shack, if I'd thought for a minute he wasn't as white as you or me?

You're like the rest of them. You've got this thing all fogged up. Her? My sister? There you go again. Would I have stood for her being around with him if I'd thought that? And then getting married to him? There was the Colonel, too. Maybe you might have met him. One of the biggest men in the state. Colonel Dolliver Toombs. That's him. Just about owns the town. The Colonel didn't think but what Lum was white enough. And if anybody could scent out coloured blood, the Colonel could.

You heard that the Colonel shot a nigger once at the polls? Well, that's right, though it was a little before my day. It was then, they claim, that the niggers all pulled out across the river. The Colonel's a little oldish now and walks with a cane, a gold-headed cane. He's dressy and noble-looking and tries to keep the town the same way. And, as I say, he's death on niggers. Yes sir, we've got a white man's town.

Ever since I was a kid I've watched the Colonel send strange niggers down the road or have the marshal send them — niggers good and bad alike, some you wouldn't mind having around if they'd keep their place. But he'd laugh in your face if you'd

tell him 'Lum wasn't as white as the whitest man in Missouri. And he said I was a damn fool and ought to hang for doing what I did. But I couldn't take any chances, Colonel or no Colonel. I'll stick to that to the last, which won't be long now. Say, what's your notion of preachers, mister? There's one been coming in here lately reading the Bible and claiming I ought to own up to being in the wrong and so get ready to. . . . My nerve? Oh, it's good enough.

That's right. I knew you'd bring those songs of Lum's up. Everybody does. But what've his songs got to do with it; that is, except when you get to looking back over it all? Of course, you can't get around the fact but that there was something about his singing that kind of carried you in over your head. Especially along towards the end, after he'd been down South. Two or three claim he was down there looking up his real folks. But I don't know anything about that. And I could maybe forget his nigger songs if it wasn't for a couple of things. One of them was a dream, and I reckon the dream had something to do with the other. Dreams are damn foolishness in a way. The trouble is, I've had this one more than once.

It must have been a week after he came home that I was down to his place mending a net. He was fixing some other tackle. A hook jabbed his finger, and a little blood came. It was a rusty hook, and I told him he'd better tend to his finger. But he just sat there looking at the blood like he saw something out of the way about it, and saying, 'My God! Oh, my God!' After a little he wiped the blood off and went over and leaned up against the house.

Did he think at the time that he had mixed blood in him? That's a thing I ain't sure about, mister. Maybe he only felt it or suspicioned it, you might say. I went over by him, but he wouldn't talk. He just stood there looking off across the river.

He was deadish white, but after a while he appeared to get better. He went in and brought out his banjo and sitting on a stump he started plunking around after a tune. Of course there was nothing in particular to that. We'd sat just that way hundreds

of times, with him playing and usually singing, and both of us rubbering across towards the other shore, so far away the trees were purplish and made you want to be over where they were. Then maybe on our side a tree would topple towards the water and we'd jump up in time to see the bank cave off, carrying the tree with it, and go melting away downstream. So, as I say, there was nothing in particular about his playing; that is, not at first.

But after a while, right in the middle of a song, he slid off on to a nigger tune and stuck to it over and over until the thing got to moaning around in my own head. The worst of it was that every now and then his old dog would sit there and howl the way a dog will when you hit the right note. It made you want to join in, too, dog or no dog, and you might have, but there was something about it all that went deeper than the singing. It was something you didn't want to get mixed up in.

You can think I'm clear off, mister, but that darky tune seemed to be a sort of wavy, mourning blackness stretching out clear over the river. And while Lum was singing I got the feeling that he was a thousand miles from me. Yes sir, I could have reached over and touched him, but, as I say, he seemed on the other side of the world. Sis came to the door and laughed at us sitting there. I had a feeling, though, that she oughtn't to be laughing. 'You two come to supper,' she said, and we went inside.

But after only a mouthful or so he shoved his chair back and went outdoors and started plunking away again. And I couldn't eat any more, either. Sis called to him, but he didn't answer. So we sat there listening to him, his voice lonesome and sad and far away. It made you feel there was something wrong in the world and that you wanted to get away from it all — wanted to die, maybe, and go to heaven or the other place. Anywhere, just so you were pulling out.

III

No, I didn't get the idea from his singing that he might be coloured. Why the hell should I? It was only, as I say, that he

seemed a thousand miles from me. It wasn't till a couple or three weeks afterwards, on that day at the carnival, that the idea you're studying about first shot into my head. And I sometimes think that's the first time it really shot into his head, too.

The carnival was along in. . . . Oh, the dream I had? Well, as I said, dreams are fool things. Or maybe you take some stock in them. That's right. They do appear to have a kind of sense to them sometimes; that is, when you go back over them and begin hooking them up with things that came along afterwards. And they get you to stewing, particularly when you have the same one more than once. The first time? It was that night after Lum jabbed his finger and then kept harping on that darky tune.

I went swirling down into some damned place or other, inky black except for little floating specks of reddish light. I started walking along, going nowhere that I know of, and pretty soon here was Lum and his dog walking along with me. And while we was walking you could hear Sis's voice crying and calling from somewhere up above. In a minute, though, you couldn't hear it any more. We came to a river. It was running full with black water, but with those specks of light floating over the blackness of it. Then we were standing over this blackness ourselves, teetering at the end of a bridge that didn't reach clear across. I tried to step back from the end of that bridge, but I couldn't, and I thought for a minute that Lum wasn't with me any longer. Then I heard him strike up an old nigger tune. 'You got shoes; I got shoes; all God's chillun got shoes.'

And while he was singing, that other shore began to lighten up until over there it was the brightest kind of day. There were buildings, tall and fine, miles of them, and shining like gold. It was a city, you might say, and there was a golden street coming right down through the middle of it clear to the river. And the longer Lum kept that song going, the closer we crept to the city. I could hear far-away voices, answering back to him and singing, 'Gonna walk all over God's heaven.' A little more and we would have been there. But the voices changed all at once to a yelling,

and down from the upper end of the street a man came tearing along towards us. It was a nigger, naked to the waist and as black as pitch. And in a second there came a running whiteness, filling that street and sweeping down after him. It was a mob, pure white — snow-white faces and clothes. The nigger stumbled and all that whiteness was just about on him when I woke up.

Well, that dream comes back to me, spreads itself out in my sleep many a night — the river and Lum with his dog and that golden city with the nigger tearing along ahead of the yelling whiteness of that mob. No, as I say, I don't reckon there's any sense to it, but just the same it sticks to me like it wanted to finish itself. Well, it'll have to hurry. Do I feel O.K.? Sure. White, kind of? That's nothing. You'd be the same with sitting in here and waiting. But that dream — I expect there is a sort of sense to it. I get to thinking that if I could figure out exactly what happened at the carnival, then this dream would finish itself. Maybe that sounds crazy, mister. I reckon it is crazy, just like everything is crazy that comes along and busts you when you ain't looking.

The carnival? That's what I was coming to. They must have told you about the day Lum chased those two niggers. But did Lum chase them? That's just the point.

It was a one-horse carnival, but plenty good for a small town. There was a merry-go-round and a Ferris wheel and some of the other usual stuff, with kids swarming all over everything and grown people too. No, Sis wasn't there. And Lum wasn't either. That is, not at first he wasn't. She was going to have a kid and Lum had sent her up to Ma's to stay a month or so. Presh Watkins and I went through the whole string of stuff, including a pretty bum leg-show, which we took in twice. But dinky as it all was, the carnival would have been as good as you'd expect if on the last day a couple of niggers and a little tan mule hadn't showed up.

The niggers roped off a spot a short ways from the merry-go-round and at the top of the slope that runs down across the tracks to the river. The little fat one — he was as black as tar —

began clowning around with the mule, making the crowd fall all over itself laughing. You can't beat a nigger when it comes to playing, mister. Personally, I like to see them around, especially around a carnival or a ball game or even a revival. They get all there is out of such a thing and make a good time for other people. As I've told you, they don't worry me as long as they keep their place.

But the minute I laid eyes on those niggers I began to feel uneasy. To make it worse, Presh came along pretty soon and said there was a white woman and a nigger kid with them. He pointed her out. She was off to our left — a big, frowzy blonde dressed in loudish red with splotches of yellow in it. And in her arms was the blackest little nigger you ever saw. It was cute, too, or would have been if she hadn't been holding it. 'They claim she's the big shine's woman,' Presh said.

Well, it turned me sick to see that white woman there with that black kid. I tried to get Presh to go up and tell the niggers they'd better beat it. But he wouldn't, and said there wasn't anything to stew about. Still, I knew there was, or I felt there was, which is worse. You know how it is, mister. You have a feeling inside of you and you ain't sure just what it's all about. I commenced looking around for Lum. I'd saw him early that morning putting out across the river; so I reckoned he hadn't gotten back.

Maybe I had a notion that Lum could do something with the niggers or maybe I didn't. All I can say is that I was worried because he wasn't there with me, or maybe I don't know what the hell I did think. Maybe, as you might say, I had those nigger tunes in the back of my head without knowing it, or that dream. But he wasn't anywhere around, and I wished I had tipped those niggers off myself. I'm glad now, though, that I didn't. In the long run I reckon those coons did me a good turn.

IV

It would have been too late, anyhow. For things hadn't much more than got going when here came Colonel Toombs elbowing

people this way and that and with a look in his eye that brought him right up to the niggers. The little coon was on his feet again after the mule had thrown him, and with his mouth, so wide open you couldn't hardly see his face; he was letting out a funny *ai-yai* sort of yell that always brought a laugh. But right in the middle of the yell the Colonel reached over the ropes and poked him in the ribs with his walking stick. 'You niggers pack up and clear out,' he said.

As I say, a nigger's good enough in his place, but I don't like to see them stand up to a white man the way that big buck stood up to the Colonel. This coon was a yellow nigger as tall or taller than the Colonel himself, and was dressed in a long-tailed black outfit, a starched shirt, and a high hat. His part was to stand outside of the ropes and blow a crazy blast on a trombone that sounded a good deal like a jack braying. In this way he drew the crowd and got them to loosen up with their dimes and nickels before the other coon would commence capering around with the mule. He and the little nigger didn't make a bad team, and if he'd kept his trap shut maybe nothing much would have happened, for you could see that the crowd, especially the out-of-town fellows, were riled at the Colonel for butting in.

But you get a coon diked out the way this one was and he has oceans of brass. Anyhow, instead of keeping still, this nigger hardly waited for the Colonel to get done talking when he gave a couple of those braying sounds. Then the damn fool stuck his mug out at the Colonel and said the Colonel wasn't talking to them, that they was part and parcel of the carnival and wasn't aiming to pull out, not for anybody. He turned to the other coon, expecting him to speak up, too, I reckon, but the little nigger was scared stiff. He just stood there twisting the ends of his red sash and seemed to be looking for a hole in the crowd, which kept closing in.

You'd think that coon had done enough damage, but when the Colonel didn't say anything and only stiffened a little and got whiter and whiter, I believe the nigger thought he'd bluffed him out. He lit a big cigar and rolled it around in his mouth

until it stuck out at a sassy angle. Then he called over to that white woman, 'Come here, honey, and listen to this man.'

But he hadn't more than got the words out when the Colonel up with his cane and whammed him across the side of the head. It was enough to knock a mule over, but all it did was to spin the nigger around and into the crowd a little. His hat didn't even come off.

I'll never get any of that day off my mind. Lum had bobbed up from somewhere. I saw him for a second standing not more than a foot or two from that nigger after the Colonel had socked him. But he didn't seem to have noticed what had happened. That is, he wasn't looking at the Colonel or the nigger but at the woman and the kid. He was bare-headed, making you think he'd come up there in a hurry. And he was the same deadish white that he was that day down on the river. I would have gone over to him, but the nigger had caught himself and whirled around with a most ungodly look on his face. You could see that he was going for the Colonel, but he hadn't taken a step when that woman let out a scream that froze everybody in his tracks, the nigger included.

She held that scream, it must have been, for a full minute, though it seemed an hour. Then, when you felt that the world had just about come to an end, she gave a gulping sound and collapsed. Everything went dead still, and in the midst of the stillness I looked around for Lum. He was gone. He must have shoved out before she screamed. Or was he gone? Anyhow, I couldn't see him, but I kept asking myself if the woman had let out that yell because Lum had stared at her so. Or was she thinking of the nigger?

It wasn't ten seconds, though, after she went down that something flashed through that crowd like lightning, and your blood came churning up out of your heart into your head. Somebody yelled 'Get that nigger!' Then hundreds were yelling it. But the niggers must have felt ahead of the yell what was coming, for before you knew it they had busted through the crowd and were tearing down on the hill towards the river, the tall nigger

in the lead and his stovepipe sticking on all the time. In a second we went pouring down after them.

But just when we were crossing the tracks by the elevator, somebody seemed to spring right up out of the ground and went tailing close in behind those niggers. It was Lum, mister, running like hell. His popping up that way slowed the crowd a little, and they began yelling for him to head the niggers off. But when I caught sight of Lum, I wasn't a part of that mob any more, though I kept on running — running harder than ever. I had the idea that I had to do something to help Lum. He had looked back at us for a second with a horrible fear on his face. It was a fear that shot him past the little nigger and almost up with the yellow one in no time at all. My heart dropped down into me, but, as I say, I kept running, thinking I had to save him from something, though I didn't know what.

For a minute it looked like Lum and the niggers were headed towards his place, but they tore right on past it and made the river a good hundred feet ahead of the mob. When I got to the bank they were pretty well out and a little downstream, with the yellow coon swimming the strongest and Lum close behind.

Well, mister, it was then I reckon that things began coming over me. I started to yell at Lum to turn back. Then something told me not to yell, that maybe he oughtn't to come back, that maybe I wouldn't want him to come back. So I didn't yell. All I did was to stand there or be shoved along with the crowd, but watching him all the time.

The crowd surged up and down swearing and looking for a boat, or they followed along the bank, throwing stones and even tin cans and sticks out at the niggers. And all the time they were yelling and screaming for Lum to get the big nigger. A stone must have hit the little coon, for he went under and didn't come up again. But the other one and Lum kept cutting farther and farther out, Lum diving every other minute but the shine never diving at all. It looked like the nigger would make it, and he would have if a gun hadn't started cracking away at him. Maybe he did make it, who knows? But after a little all you could

see was his hat floating along next to a big log. And Lum was gone, too. A hand had come up over the log from the far side and had hung on for a minute and then let go. It was Lum's hand.

That brought the crowd to its senses. It had worked its will with those niggers. Now it was just as wild to get out there and save Lum. Why didn't I go out there and try to save him? That's just it. Things commenced ripping through my head and I began figuring he had been running *from* that crowd, mister. And the idea took hold of me that he wouldn't have run if he hadn't been a nigger himself. As I say, the notion came to me and grew on me that there was some nigger in him and that that was why he was running.

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Well, some boats went out, but they didn't find him. I reckon I was glad of it. Then another thing came over me. I tried to keep this thing out of my head, mister. I swore at it and did drive it off. But you can't drive a thing like that off very far. No white man could have. I started back towards town, and it was waiting for me at the top of the hill.

There was a bunch of women close to the merry-go-round, chattering the way women will no matter what's up. A couple of them waved for me to come over. So I did. In the midst of them was that big shine's woman. She was sitting on the ground with the kid hugged close to her and was rocking back and forth, making a low, moaning sound.

'What'll become of her?' the women kept saying. I went over and shook her. She stopped rocking and looked up. 'Does this young one belong to you and that nigger?' I asked her. I had to shake her good and hard again before she nodded her head. But when she did nod it, that thing I had to do was as clear as day. So I started off to get it done and over with.

You want to know whether I'm still sure Lum was running from that mob and not with it? Well, there you are, mister.

At the time, as I say, I was sure enough, but now when you ask me, things start getting foggy again. If Lum was chasing the niggers, that's one thing. If he thought he was being chased himself, that's another. There was that fear on his face and then. . . . Oh, her? Sis? Now, that's different. That part of it ain't troubling me. Not a bit. That's the idea that's clear as day and that I keep hanging on to. Anybody but a fool could see that I had to do what I did, whether I was absolutely sure about him or not. You say that maybe Lum was white after all? But how could I tell that? After he had gone and died I could never be sure. So there was only one thing to do and I did it. As I've already said, any white man that is a white man would have done the same.

You can't figure out yet that there was any sense in me doing for Sis? Why, she would have wanted me to do for her, mister. There's a heap worse things than dying, and I would have killed Sis whether she wanted me to or not. I told you there was going to be a young one. Just put yourself in my place. Would you have taken any chances on that young one of hers not being the right colour and turning out, maybe, as black as they make 'em? You still don't see? Well, where was you raised, mister? Where in the name of God was you brought up?